

5-15-2009

Welcome to America?: The Perceptions of Discrimination Experienced by International Students

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Welcome to America?: The Perceptions of Discrimination Experienced by
International Students

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration

by

Peter L. Cho

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May, 2009

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank several persons that played an active role in helping me through my doctoral journey. First, I would like to thank Dr. Marietta Del Favero for her steadfast support, advice and encouragement through this process. I would also like to thank my doctoral committee, Dr. April Bedford, and Dr. Janice Thomas for their support.

I would also like to thank several professors who have had a great impact on my personal growth. To Dr. Andre' Perry, Dr. Angela Alexander, and Dr. Betty Porter: thank you for being excellent instructors and mentors. Dr. Jim Killacky, thank you for starting me off on the doctoral journey, and encouraging me to pursue a life-goal.

Finally, I wanted to thank my family who made it possible for me to pursue my education. Special thanks to my wife Louanne, Mom, Dad, and Albert, for putting up with me over the last six and a half years of coursework, papers, sleepless nights, and exams.

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Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of discrimination as it pertains to the experiences of international students studying in Southeast Louisiana. This qualitative study seeks to answer the questions of where and how international students perceive discrimination, and how discrimination affects a student's overall experience as a foreign student in the United States.

The intent of this research study is to address the sizable gap in the literature on perceived discrimination towards international students, and introduces specific concepts from critical theory in developing a formal conceptual framework model for continued research in this area.

Utilizing the concept of sites of struggle as a conceptual framework, eleven international students studying in Southeast Louisiana were interviewed about their perceptions of discrimination from within three areas of interest: federal regulations, educational arena, and social arena. Their responses are presented using their own words via verbatim transcripts of the interview sessions. A discussion of the respondents' experiences and its significance to their perceptions of discrimination within the three areas of interest follows. Implications for policy, practice, and research, along with suggestions for future research conclude this study.

Key Words

Critical Theory
Discrimination
Foreign Students

Immigration
Prejudice
Racism

September 11th
SEVIS
Sites of Struggle

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Forward

My name is Peter Cho, and I am a Professor of music, and the Department Chair of Humanities at Delgado Community College, New Orleans, Louisiana. I am also a sixth-year doctoral student and a member of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) cohort of the Educational Administration degree program at the University of New Orleans. As a teacher, I come into daily contact with international students, and often find myself having interesting conversations with them about the differences between the American educational system, and the systems from my students' countries.

During the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, many international students crowded into my office after their classes, and listened to the unfolding events. Several students asked questions wondering how the attacks would change their lives, and whether or not they would have to discontinue their education in the US. Many students wondered how they would be perceived as foreigners, and if they could expect any negative treatment or discrimination as a result. These were questions that I could not answer, nor could I assure the students that the attacks would not have an affect on their educational pursuits.

As a result of the attacks, the US government passed the USA PATRIOT act, and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was developed to track foreign students, in an attempt to protect the country from further attack. This along with new visa and travel restrictions had the affect of drastically reducing the number of foreign students attempting to study in the US. (Arnone, 2003b,c, d; Hoover, 2003; Johnson, 2003). Although Delgado's international student population was affected by this legislation, our enrollment of international students remained healthy.

During this time, I interviewed several international students for a beginning qualitative research course. Several of the students mentioned to me that they believed that they were singled out for unfair treatment by either the US government while visiting the US embassy in their native country, or by faculty and other students at Delgado. Some students also expressed that they had been treated unfairly in their interactions with the general public.

The interviews, along with the experiences I shared with my students during the September 11th attacks, made me wonder if the terrorist attacks had anything to do with a greater incidence of discriminatory acts against foreign students, or if the perceptions of discrimination might lie in other factors such as the inability to adjust to new environments and situations, or secondary factors such as access to available support structures.

After much deliberation with my major professor at the time, I was able to sort out my different interests in International Education (IE) and narrow my topic by investigating my reasons for wanting to conduct such a study. What I discovered about myself was that I was drawn to the writings and theories of several key figures in the Radical education movement, primarily Paulo Freire and his ideas about educating the oppressed, and Dr. Michael Apple, and the issue of Critical Theory (examining how the dominant culture can shape the educational experiences of others). What also drew me to this topic was the concept of social justice, to insure that all students have the same opportunity for a quality education.

This study explores the experiences of international students and their personal perceptions of discrimination. Although there have been some preliminary studies in this area, most are relatively outdated (Cummings. 2001; Hays & Lin, 1994; Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2003; Lamkin, 2000) and are not written from the perspective of the individual student.

Furthermore, there is a lack of a formal conceptual framework for researching the perceptions of discrimination experienced by individual international students. I intend to propose the conceptual framework used in this study as a formal tool for future research of discrimination as perceived by international students. It is my hope that this study will help address the questions about discrimination asked by my students that I could not answer, and give some insight as to how perceived discrimination has affected my students' educational experiences.

Defining the Problem

Institutions of higher learning in the United States have experienced a tremendous influx of international students, from approximately 50,000 students in the early 1960's to a high of 586,323 for the 2002 school year. Ever since 2002, the numbers of international students has been steadily dropping. The last year of available data (2006) records the number of international students at 564,766 (Open Doors, 2007).

The limited literature in international education suggests several factors that might contribute to the drop in student numbers. First, the travel restrictions placed on international students after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and the resulting tracking system to enforce immigration regulations (SEVIS) have been cited as a significant factor in the decline of international student immigration (Arnone, 2003b, c, d; Bollag, 2004; Johnson, 2003; United States Department of Justice, 2003; Wilson, 2004). According to Open Doors (2007), the drop in international students by approximately 14 percent since the terrorist attacks is significant, since many colleges in the US depend on international students to fill the seats in high-tech programs such as science, technology, engineering, and math.

There have also been several studies conducted on diversity within educational institutions that suggest that there may be factors within the institutions themselves that are not conducive to the success of international students (Hurtado, 1992; Leong & Chou, 1996; Asmar, Proude, and Inge 2004). Other studies indicate that there are connections between the negative interactions between international students and the local populations, which may have reduced the likelihood of international students successfully completing their studies (The Victoria University study, 2006).

Discussions with directors of international education and directors of international programs seem to confirm this, mentioning that discrimination and unfair treatment are significant issues that discourage international student success. In studies conducted by Poyrazli & Lopez (2007), Hayes & Lin (1994), Lamkin (2000), and Charles & Stewart (1991), discrimination is mentioned as being one of the significant factors that limit the success of international students completing degrees in American educational institutions. According to the above researchers, major issues of adjustment, academic overload, differences in educational systems, and understanding American culture are complicated when discrimination is introduced, ultimately creating barriers to success for international students.

This study seeks to address the significant lack of literature in the area of international student's experiences with discrimination, as well as the lack of a formal conceptual framework to study the experiences of discrimination experienced by foreign students. Although there are a few studies that have explored perceptions of discrimination by international students (Hanassab, 2006; Krahe et al. 2005; Quillian & Campbell, 2003), these have been quantitative studies that do not provide the depth required to fully understand this issue.

This study addresses the lack of depth in the previous studies, in that it documents the experiences of students from their perspective as non-natives. The overall goal of this study is to provide insight into the significant issues that international students face on a daily basis. I am also introducing a conceptual framework model I have developed for this study, based upon the three major areas of significance as illustrated in the literature review section, as a formal tool for systematic research in the area of discrimination towards international students. It is hoped that this will aid future researchers in being able to address the issues faced by international students on a daily basis.

Issues Surrounding the Study of Discrimination

In order to study a topic such as discrimination, there are a few issues that I need to address. Because there are differing opinions as to the meaning of discrimination, I need to set a few boundaries for the purposes of this study. First, the definition of discrimination for the purposes of this dissertation is the inequitable treatment directed towards an individual or group of people.

Since discrimination is a phenomenon that is perceived by individuals and groups, it is often difficult to agree on when or if a specific instance of discrimination occurs. It is also very difficult to document actual instances of discrimination, since it is virtually impossible to know when instances of discrimination will occur. It is also impossible for a researcher to follow his or her subjects 24 hours a day with a video recorder to document instances of discrimination.

By viewing this study through a critical theory lens, the definition of discrimination for this study becomes a bit clearer. The critical theory world-view assumes that all social structures are created by a dominant group. These social structures will reflect the values, ideas, and culture of the dominant group, and are intended to primarily benefit only those in the dominant

group. Because of this, those who are not members of the dominant group are always at a disadvantage due to their status as non-members. The amount of inequity will be determined by how similar the non-member's culture, ideas, physical features are to the dominant group. Using this framework, all international students will be considered members of an outside group, attempting to use the social structures of a group in power.

This study is an attempt to understand the phenomenon of discrimination in the international student community as they attempt an education in the US educational system. As an educator, I am particularly interested in issues of social justice and equity. The use of critical theory allows me to investigate the phenomenon of discrimination with a much clearer focus and is geared towards bringing more equity into the experiences of international students.

Overview of Methodology

In order to understand how international students have experienced discrimination, and how they create meaning from the experience, I have chosen to use qualitative methods to conduct this study. Because I am seeking to understand the experiences of individual students, it is essential that I understand the experiences from the students' point of view.

According to Maxwell (2005) and Patton (2002), the best way to understand how a person perceives his or her experience is to use qualitative methods such as the standardized interview, in which specific questions are used to probe into the person's experiences. By applying Patton's (2002) foundational question: "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" to my own inquiry, the choice of a phenomenological paradigm seems the most logical (p. 104).

I am particularly interested in how the participants in my study make sense out of the experience of being discriminated against, and how they use this experience to generate meaning

in their individual and shared lives. According to Creswell, a phenomenological study involves “describing the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about the concept or the phenomenon” (1998, p.51). I use the data gathered in this study that demonstrate the “lived experience” of the students, and compare them with the instances in the literature that will be highlighted in the literature review chapter. This will be discussed in detail in the discussion chapter.

For this study, I conducted a standard interview with eleven international students that were selected by directors of international education at the Louisiana Public University (LPU), and The Community College of Southeastern Louisiana (CCSL) (both pseudonyms), based upon their prior experiences with discrimination, related to their status as international students. I used a purposeful sampling technique to acquire the students for my participant group. The methods of data collection, data analysis, theme development and a discussion of the findings will be addressed below in a section outlining this study’s organization.

Research Questions

In this study, I sought to answer the following primary question:

How do international students who have experienced incidences of personal discrimination based upon their international status define and perceive discrimination?

Secondary questions include:

How has the student reacted to incidents of discrimination?

How does the student’s perception of discrimination affect their view of their educational experience in the US, specifically the view of their teachers, fellow students, and their school?

How does the student’s perception of discrimination affect their view of the local population in the US?

What can researchers and practitioners of International Education do to diminish the affects of discrimination towards international students?

Significance of Study

Since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington DC, the number of international students attempting to study in the US has declined drastically (Open Doors, 2007). This has affected many institutions of higher education, specifically in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, where international students make up a significant portion in the student body (Bollag, 2004; Wilson, 2004; Arnone, 2003b, d; Johnson, 2003).

Directors of International Education (IE) in the New Orleans area have mentioned that since the September 11th attacks, international students have experienced an increasing level of discrimination in many aspects of their lives. The scant literature on discrimination towards international students seems to support this (Hanassab, 2006; Krahe et al. 2005; Quillian & Campbell, 2003). There is however, a significant lack of literature or research on the perceptions of discrimination from the point of view of the international student. There is also a lack of a recognized conceptual framework for the study of international student discrimination.

The significance of this study is that it documents the first-hand experiences of international students who have experienced discrimination, allowing them to express the significance that discrimination plays in their daily lives using their own voice. This adds a level of depth to the existing literature, which is predominantly quantitative in nature, and does not address the affects of discrimination from the student's perspective. In addition, this study introduces concepts of critical theory to address issues of inequity social justice that often accompany instances of discrimination.

Perhaps more importantly, this study develops a formal conceptual framework for studying and researching the perceptions of discrimination experienced by international students that addresses the issues of inequity experienced by international students. It is hoped that this framework can be used as a foundation, or as a model for continued qualitative research in this area, and that practitioners of IE can use this as a tool in furthering research on this topic. It is also hoped that this tool will allow practitioners to better address the issues of discrimination as experienced by their international student population.

Organization of the Study

What follows in Chapter two is a review of the current literature on discrimination in education. The first section focuses on critical theory as it relates to discrimination in education. This section examines the concept of critical theory, specifically the issues of unequal power distribution in society and social injustice. In addition, this section highlights the efforts by critical theorists such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and their contemporaries to remedy social injustice by actively pursuing change, based upon critical reflection and research that examines the use of education as a social construct to perpetuate the status quo. This section uses examples of racial disparity within education including the racial composition of schools, as well as the disparity of different forms of capital including human capital, financial capital, social capital, and cultural capital to examine education from a critical theory lens. It is through this lens that I present a revised conceptual framework model in the discussions chapter.

The second section examines the issues pertaining to US Federal Regulations that have had an impact on the lives of international students. I primarily discuss the regulations that have been enacted in reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. This section concentrates on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the US

Government's database to track the movement of foreign students that was implemented as part of post-September 11th legislation.

The third section examines the current literature on discrimination and international students that coincides with current practice as defined by directors of International Education (IE) through previous interviews I conducted with IE directors at several New Orleans's colleges. The major topics described by the IE directors and current literature include the issues of prejudice, stereotyping, language proficiency and adjustment issues.

The current literature in this area (Hanassab, 2006; Hsieh, 2007; Olivas & Li, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) describes the different environments where international students commonly experience discrimination. Among the many different areas within the literature where international students experience discrimination, the two areas that appear with regularity are the environment international students experience on campus, and the external or social environment experienced in the international students' daily lives.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the development of the original conceptual framework model I used to conduct the study. I illustrate how the topics listed above, as well as the major issues in the literature cited by IE practitioners as the most problematic issues of discrimination faced by international students, are used to develop a clear and logical model for future qualitative research in the area of international student discrimination.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in developing this study. It includes my research goals, negotiations with gatekeepers at interview locations, techniques for accessing the population to be studied, data collections techniques and data analysis techniques.

Chapter four describes the study's findings. Following the qualitative tradition, I use the participants' own words to describe their experiences with discrimination, and the affect that this

has on their view of their educational experiences, social experiences, and experiences with the local population.

Chapter five presents a discussion on the themes that emerged from the transcript data and the literature review. I discuss the implications of the pilot study, as well as the importance of using critical theory in examining the issues and themes that are documented in the literature, and emerged from the study data. I use these emerging issues and themes to present a revised conceptual framework model that is based upon the concept of *Sites of Struggle*, pioneered by critical theorist. I finish the chapter discussing the possible implications of this study towards policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of the Literature

This chapter presents a review of the literature on discrimination and international students. The first section focuses on critical theory as it relates to issues of inequality in higher education. It begins with a discussion of the concept of critical theory and its historic roots as a tool for social critique of modern society. The issue of unequal power distribution within society and social injustice is emphasized.

The first section also examines the role of critical theory in education, describing the inequality of power that is present in higher education, and the perpetuation of the power imbalance through the existing structures and curriculum within higher education. The views of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Michael Apple (pioneers in critical theory as applied towards higher education), are used to demonstrate the relationship of critical theory to the inequities present in higher education, as well as to suggest means for addressing the inequities.

Examples of the inequity of power within higher education are presented beginning with a historical discussion on the origins and purposes of higher education in America, and for whom an education was intended to benefit. This section illustrates how education can serve as a social construct, in order to reproduce existing power structures. The first section continues with an examination of the role that race plays in the imbalance of power in education, and various forms of human, social, and cultural capital that are affected by race.

The second section examines the issues surrounding international students' experiences with regulations set forth by the US Federal government. Section two will focus primarily on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the US government's database used for tracking the movement of international students. This section also focuses on the issues of SEVIS implementation, problems with the system, and the resulting affect it had towards

international students. The second section also discusses the changes that have been made to US immigration policy, and how this has affected the lives of international students. The mixed signals that have also been produced by recent developments in legislation are also discussed.

The third section of this chapter examines the current literature on discrimination as it pertains to international students, and documented instances of prejudice, stereotyping, language proficiency issues and the interaction with the local population. The remainder of this chapter discusses the original conceptual framework used to undertake this study, and how the reviewed literature informs this framework.

Examining Higher Education Through a Critical Theory Lens

Critical Theory

The term critical theory is used to describe a social theory that was developed in 1923 by several groups of radical German philosophers and social theorists collectively known as the Frankfurt School of social sciences (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). Credit is usually given to Max Horkheimer, one of the preeminent members of the Frankfurt School, as the originator of the term critical theory. In his essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*, Horkheimer contrasts the difference between the use of traditional social theory (to describe or understand society and its actions), and critical theory, designed to critique society for the purpose of changing society as a whole (Burbles & Berk, 1999). Fundamental to the world-view of the critical theorists is that there exists an imbalance of power in society at all levels, especially in social relationships. Due to the imbalance of power, society will naturally divide itself into two separate groups: the oppressor and the oppressed.

Critical theorists believe that it is the goal of critical theory to emancipate oppressed groups from the state of inequality by using social critique to illuminate the imbalance of power

so that each group will recognize that the imbalance exists. According to Freire (1973) and Giroux (1988), both the oppressed and oppressor must be made conscious of the imbalance of power in order to change society for the better. One of the core principles of critical theory is found in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973). He states that it is important for the oppressed to develop *conscientizacao*, or a conscious awareness of the system of oppression that envelops their lives. According to Freire, "freedom begins with the recognition of a system of oppressive relations, and one's place within that system" (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 2).

Although a major goal for critical theorists is to illuminate the imbalances of power, it is not enough to just recognize that the imbalance exists. To the critical theorist, the use of critique for illumination is only the first step. Freire (1973), Giroux (1988), and Apple (1999, 2003) mention that the purpose of illumination is to bring the oppressed into an awareness of their position in society, in order to lay the groundwork for real social change. What is important to critical theorists is that illumination must lead to corrective action. It is the combination of consciousness and purposeful action that makes critical theory important as a tool for social change.

Freire in particular lays out the groundwork as to how critical theory should be used as a tool for social justice, and equality in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973). He posits that in order to achieve equality and social justice, the change of one's thought and active practice must go together. He introduces the word *praxis*, to describe the process of using reflection and action toward the goal of social change. According to Freire: "critical consciousness is brought about not through intellectual effort alone, but through praxis - through the authentic union of action and reflection" (in Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 5).

Because critical theorists are concerned with systematic social change, they are also interested in examining how different organizational systems such as political systems, governmental systems, and educational systems harbor inequalities of power. Michael Apple (2005) and Henry Giroux (1988) mention that the same inequality found in individual social relations will also manifest itself in the organizational systems that are created by individuals within society.

According to the critical theorists, all organizational systems will harbor an imbalance of power that will favor the oppressor. Critical theorists believe that since organizational structures are created by the dominant groups (oppressor) within society, organizational structures will always benefit the dominant group in its reflection of the group's values, biases, ideas, and ideals. In fact, critical theorists see organizational structures as tools for the transmission and reproduction of the dominant group's values in order to consolidate and retain power and control for members of the dominant group (Apple, 2005, 2003, 2000; Giroux, 1998; Burbules and Berk, 1999; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005).

It is the job of critical theory to use critical reflection in order to unmask the inequalities of power (often hidden), and to allow all persons within each organization to understand their role and place from within the organization, in order for Freire's praxis to occur. The three authors and theorists mentioned above: Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Michael Apple have been at the forefront of the effort to transform higher education by using critical theory as a tool for emancipation, and social justice. When applied to higher education, the use of critical theory is commonly used to dissect the "areas" or "arenas" in which the oppressor's culture and influence can be manifested. The most common area within higher education that critical theorists are concerned about is the curriculum, and the influence that the dominant culture can

exert in the creation of an official curriculum. The use of critical theory in examining the dominant culture's influence on the curriculum, educational practices, and what constitutes "valuable" knowledge is referred to as critical pedagogy. It is the application of critical theory to the context of higher education that is important to me in framing my study, and is examined in detail in the section below.

Critical Theory in Higher Education: Freire, Giroux, and Apple

As mentioned in the above section, critical theorists believe that there is an imbalance of power within all social organizations, including educational institutions, and higher education as an institution. The use of critical theory within this context (critical pedagogy) is intended as a reaction against the inequitable situations existing within the context of higher education.

Giroux (1998) describes the disparity in power between the oppressors and oppressed in higher education by stating that the main function of education is to serve as an agent of social reproduction to ensure the transmission of the values of the dominant group to future generations.

At best, public schooling offers limited individual mobility to members of the working class and other oppressed groups, but it is a powerful instrument for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production and the dominant legitimating ideologies of ruling groups.... Rather than viewing school knowledge as objective, as something to be merely transmitted to students, radical theorists argue that school knowledge is a particular representation of dominant culture, a privileged discourse that is constructed through a selective process of emphasis and exclusions (Giroux, 1998, p. xxx).

The responsibility for illuminating the inequalities in higher education in order to promote positive change is shared by all within the organization, especially students and teachers. According to Burbules and Berk (1999), it is the job of every progressive educator to work within their educational institutions to raise questions about the inequalities of power, and to question the structures from within education that transmit messages of oppression and inequality in order to bring about a revolutionary change. This can be readily accomplished. For example, a professor could hold a discussion with his or her students about the dynamic of power in the classroom, and the traditions and structures that currently exist in their own higher education experience. This would not only allow the students to reflect on their own experiences, but also show the students that there are some factors within their own education that reflect the inequity of power that exists within academe.

The author who has most emphasized this, and is most well known for the ideas of liberation within education is Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator who was instrumental in promoting change through literacy in Latin American peasant communities between 1946 and 1962. In 1968, he published his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (translated into English in 1973), where he described the nature of oppression and the steps that an individual must make in order to transition from being an oppressed human into an enlightened human.

According to Freire (1973), the oppressed live within a culture of silence, where every person, however ignorant, should be able to reflect critically upon his or her world. Through the process of dialog with others and critical reflection, a person can be transformed from an object to a subject, and begins the process of becoming liberated through *conscientizacao*, the application of critical consciousness. The single most fundamental barrier to the liberation of the

self is the ingrained belief in the necessity and inevitability of the status quo, no matter how unjust (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

Although Freire was one of the first persons to attempt to use critical theory in the context of education, many other critical theorists and educators have been influenced by the ideas from Freire's conscientizacao and praxis, both of which serve as tools in developing critical awareness of the nature of educational institutions, in that they serve as instruments of reproduction of the values of the dominant or oppressor culture. One of Freire's contemporaries and a leading American critical theorist is Henry Giroux, who took the preliminary ideas of praxis and conscientizacao, and applied its principles to the American higher education system.

Although a contemporary of Freire, Giroux differs in his approach to change. He stresses that the language used in the liberation process is as important as the process of conscientizacao itself. According to Giroux (1988), one of the main criticisms of critical theory as it applies to education is that current critical educators have not developed the language needed to bring about social justice. The current language used by critical theorists consists of the "language of critique" (p. 134), which offers only critique, instead of positing solutions. This only fulfills one of the two requirements of praxis (reflection but not action). Instead, Giroux suggests the creation of a "language of possibility" (p.135), as part of the liberation process. To accomplish this, Giroux suggest allowing students the opportunity to create their own educational vocabulary, which would incorporate the students' life experiences, modes of reasoning, common language, and dispositions. This would provide the students an active voice on how they define their world, and ultimately allow the students to become emancipated by being able to recognize the inequities present in their educational experiences.

In a chapter in his book *Teachers as Intellectuals* entitled *Crisis and Possibilities in Public Education*, Giroux stresses that language should be tailored to “raise the ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice” (Giroux, 1988, p. 177). Most of *Teachers as Intellectuals* revolves around the theme of deconstructing the structures of higher education including the language of schooling, literacy and the politics of voice, cultural politics, teachers as transformative intellectuals, the current crisis in education and the issue of dominant culture in the curriculum in order to illuminate the inequalities present in higher education, so that radical change may take place.

Another contemporary of Freire and Giroux who has made major contributions towards the critical theory movement in higher education is Michael Apple. Apple sees the conservatism present in today’s higher education system as an attack on the gains made by critical theorist over the last few decades. In *Doing Things the “Right” Way: Legitimizing Educational Inequalities in Conservative Times*, Apple (2005) describes the environment of education as a platform of struggle and compromise, in which the larger issues of power and control over what institutions should do, who should institutions serve, and who should have access to resources play out on a daily basis.

Apple interprets education as a class struggle in which the dominant culture deliberately links their ideas, ideals and goals of a democratic, economic free market to the goals of higher education. Because education is seen as a commodity in this world-view, based upon the free market, the success of education depends on the perceived value it has to the consumer and society in general. This has implications as to whom an education is intended to benefit.

In the conservative world-view, the term private is associated with efficiency, privilege, and goodness. In contrast, the term public is associated with corruption, inefficiency, and waste.

Due to the association with these terms, a private education is perceived as having more value, or more of the values that are important to the dominant culture. Because of this, support for the public educational system has been steadily declining over the past decades (Apple, 2005).

Another major theme introduced in Apple's writings is the issue of race in education, specifically the notion that the "neutrality" seen in current educational systems will be of particular benefit to members of the ruling class, and often limits the gains that the "other" are able to make within the current educational system. In his essay *Freire and the Politics of Race in Education*, Apple (2003) describes that the oppression that occurs within educational institutions is often hidden, in that persons not of the dominant (White) race will inevitably suffer oppression due to the unseen structures within educational institutions. Apple suggests that the language used in education also connotes the invisibility or neutrality of "White."

"Our very language speaks to the invisibility of power relations in our ordinary talk about whiteness. 'We' speak of a sheet of white paper as 'blank.' A room painted all white is seen as perhaps 'needing a bit of color.' Other examples could be multiplied. But the idea of whiteness as neutrality, as a there that is not there, is ideally suited for designating that social group that is to be taken as 'human ordinary'" (Apple 2003, quoting Dyer, 1997, p. 115). Apple further posits that the term "race" is a category that is applied primarily towards non-whites or the "other." Because Whites have been historically seen as the norm in higher education, all "others" could be categorized as not the norm, or different (Apple, 2003).

Because of the neutrality that is implied in a higher education, it is assumed by the public that education is impartial, objective, and benefits all races and people equally. Critical theorists would disagree, mentioning that oppression is hidden behind the guise of neutrality, which makes it difficult to illuminate the power differential that exists between the educational

experience of White students and the “other” (Apple, 2000). The next few sections will demonstrate the inequities commonly found in American higher education system, based upon the critical theorist’s view of assumed neutrality.

Historical Perspective: Education as a Social Construct

When examining the history of higher education in America, one can see that the roles that colleges and universities play have continuously changed, due to external forces from society including changes in cultural norms. These external forces are also responsible for influencing the practices and traditions within higher education.

The term social construct refers to the construction of an entity or set of beliefs in a social system that is created by either participants or by a culture or society. In developing a social construct, a culture or society agrees to the creation of a belief system or entity. The society then agrees to follow specific rules and principles regarding the system of beliefs or entity in order to develop a normative culture (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

When examining the practices and traditions within higher education, one can best see how social construction, in the form of influences from external forces, has influenced higher education by examining the history and evolution of colleges and universities. As mentioned in an above section, the goals of higher education, and the values that are transmitted through artifacts such as the curriculum, can be seen through a critical theory lens as a construct of the ruling or dominant class, which reinforces the inequity of power in education. The following section explores the historical roots of higher education in America, and illustrates how the inequities of power have been present in higher education throughout American history.

According to Fuhrmann and Grasha (1998), the primary function of the college during the colonial period of American history, was twofold: to prepare White males for the ministry,

and to prepare the society's young elite to continue to lead and shape the country's future. The curriculum at this time consisted of Greek, Latin, mathematics, and "moral truths," which allowed the cultural elite to develop common values and goals. During the 19th century, the curriculum was broadened to include geology, physics, chemistry, economics, anthropology and sociology. This was the result of scholars returning from Germany, bringing with them the traditions of scholarly inquiry and scientific specialization, leading to a division of the curriculum into different disciplines. This period also introduced the lecture and extracurricular activities into the social fabric of education.

The beginning of the 20th century saw a great deal of change in higher education. Furman and Grasha (1998) mention that the student population increased in size and that students from different backgrounds and social status entered the academy in large numbers. Along with this new population came new and different values, beliefs and customs, often in conflict with the established culture within academe. The addition of vocational or practical subjects, along with a liberal learning view and an emphasis on social development were changes to the curriculum that were influenced by the new demands placed on education by the new student populations. Other changes included an emphasis on scientific discovery, a reliance on new technologies, the beginnings of an emphasis on life-long learning, and an increasing number of stakeholders to whom education became more accountable.

In each of the periods mentioned above, the purpose of education changed to meet the needs of those in power, or those that had influence in the decision making process within higher education, including whom the college would educate. Because of the influx of new students and their new ideas, ideals and values, the dominant or ruling class in charge of the educational systems viewed these different ideas and values as an attack on the current and accepted

practices in higher education. Critical theorists would posit that those in power would use all of their influence in trying to limit the “attack” on their value structures by instituting changes in curriculum and tradition that would insure the transmission of their value systems (Apple, 2005).

Since students attending colleges and universities abide by the institution’s rules and regulations, and follow the sequence of courses prescribed by the curriculum, they explicitly and implicitly agree to the framework constructed by the dominant culture or society, making education a true social construct.

Dominant Society’s Influence and Challenges From the Minority

In a chapter entitled *Social Forces Shaping the Curriculum*, Garcia and Ratcliff (1997) explain how social forces such as demographics, politics, economics, and technology shape the college education. The authors suggest that education and the curriculum cannot be removed from the broader social context, and that the social forces mentioned above will influence the curriculum in determining what a student needs to know, and why.

Benavot and Resh (2001) agree with Garcia and Ratcliff, mentioning that an official curriculum contains or defines the core cultural values and norms that are to be transmitted to and internalized by the next generation of citizens, and is conducted through a formal series of courses prescribed by the educational system. Since the curriculum reflects the normative world-views of the dominant society, and external forces compete to affect dominant society, there will always be political tension in determining what constitutes a normative world-view. Different stakeholders will always try to exert their political, social, economic, and cultural ideas into the official curriculum.

Allen Bloom (1987) mentions that each society will use the educational system in order to produce a certain kind of human being. The educational system is used as a tool by those in

power to produce citizens with common fundamental values. “The intention is more or less explicit, more or less a result of reflection; but even the neutral subjects, like reading, writing and arithmetic, take their place in the vision of the educated person. In some nations, the goal was the pious person, in others warlike, others industrious. Always important is the political regime, which needs citizens who are in accord with its fundamental principle” (p. 201). I see Bloom’s statement as confirming the critical theorists’ idea that the dominant culture will use the educational system as a tool to transmit the ideals and values of the dominant class to the society at large.

In each of the above examples, the dominant culture uses education as the primary means in perpetuating the cultural norms and expectations of those in power towards others in an educational setting. What is interesting to see is how changing demographics alter the balance of power as new world-views and new demands on limited resources exert pressure on the status quo.

As new groups seek to participate in the educational process, the dominant culture becomes increasingly aware that their culture and values are being challenged by the culture and values of new students. In the 1960’s, the US Civil Rights movement opened the doors of higher education to students of racial minorities. In the 1970’s, a greater number of women sought a higher education. The result of this was the addition of new courses and programs such as women’s studies programs and ethnic studies programs. During this time, there was also an expanded awareness towards multiculturalism, cultural diversity, and globalization (Garcia and Ratcliff, 1997). These programs challenged the concepts and assumptions held by the dominant society of what a college education and curriculum should look like, and destabilized the social construct put forth by members of the dominant culture.

Garcia and Ratcliff (1997) illustrate the reaction of the dominant culture against change by utilizing its political influence to counter any incursions by new ideologies or values. The authors describe the reaction as a culture war, where the dominant culture seeks a return to “traditional” values and the return to a more conservative, standard curriculum. This was seen as an attack on the more liberal values of multiculturalism by sub-dominant groups, who saw the attempt to return to traditional values and a standard curriculum as an oppressive move to forcefully impose the civic and educational values of the dominant culture towards the minority culture.

The Use of Curriculum to Perpetuate Social Order

As seen above, the use of the curriculum as a strategic device to transmit the culture, values and traditions of the dominant group to other generations of students is a common tactic used by groups in power to remain in control. Benavot and Resh (2001) describe how special interest groups will seek to embed specific types of knowledge in order to insure the transmission of particular world views and social knowledge in the official school setting as a way to perpetuate or strengthen the social order of the privileged. Chen (2005) mentions, “...through explicit and implicit curriculum, schools participate in shaping students’ cultural identity. As institutions of the dominant culture, schools typically help maintain the existing social structure by transmitting dominant cultural ideologies to students” (p. 12-13).

A result of educational social reproduction is the creation of a context of inequity between the dominant and subordinate groups, creating barriers to learning and success for members of sub-dominant groups. Unequal learning opportunities can significantly affect student success in the educational system, and can help strengthen existing class divisions (Benavot and Resh, 2001). This inequity can also be seen in the form of other social constraints

such as the funding of schools via tax base (where schools in economically depressed areas receive fewer resources), and in the ability of students attending these schools to benefit from the exposure to the cultural capital, habitus and expectations of faculty and peers from higher SES areas, which I explore further in the next section.

Disparity of Power in Higher Education: Race and Inequality

When examining the issue of discrimination in higher education, the issue of race and racism seem to be the most prevalent and pressing issue. According to Foster (2005), racism on college campuses, specifically in the Southern US is partially due to the culture of inequality that allows both subtle and overt acts of racism to go seemingly unnoticed or unchallenged by the general public, leading to minorities feeling alienated and mistreated.

Sylvia Hurtado (1992) expresses similar thoughts, mentioning that there are historical issues that still linger. Due to traditions and common practice, institutional compliance with legal injunctions for increased minority participation in higher education has been problematic, and higher education is still racially stratified. As demonstrated below, the barriers created by institutional racism can have a profound affect on members of a minority population seeking a higher education.

Although there are several different definitions of institutional racism, the most common refer to the collective ingrained policies and procedures practiced by an institution that creates an unfair advantage for the majority population, a situation that is discriminatory not from intention, but from effect (Foster, 2005). This can be seen as a series of informal barriers that prevent members of the minority access to certain offices, privileges, or chances at institutional advancement to higher levels in their systems (Jeanquart-Barone, as cited in Foster, 2005).

In addition to the issues presented above on institutional racism, there have been several

studies conducted on the racial climate of educational institutions, and the impact that the climate had on negative experiences toward minorities on campus. Since perception of campus climate is largely dependant on individual's personal views and experiences on campus, it would seem logical that different racial groups would have differing opinions as to the racial climate on their campus. As an example, in a study conducted by Launcelot Brown (2004) on campus diversity, he noted that White faculty and students viewed their campuses as being warm, friendly, and inviting. He also found that minority students in his study viewed the same campus as unfriendly, and much less positively than White students and faculty. He also mentioned that the White students on campus were largely unaware that minorities often perceived the traditions and policies of their campuses as unfair or racist.

Sylvia Hurtado (1992) described some very similar results in her study of campus racial climate. She found that since perceptions vary by race, there were differences in opinion as to the level of minority support on campus. Hurtado's study found that although a majority of White students perceived the college as minority friendly, both Black and Chicano students reported the racial climate at their institutions to be hostile, and that the level of hostility perceived differed between the two minority groups studied.

Disparity of Power in Higher Education: The Affect of Race on Capital

One of the areas of racial disparity discussed in the literature is the difference in the ability of minorities to utilize specific resources to their advantage as it pertains to higher education. The ability to afford an education varies by social class and race (Lee, 2006). Mickelson (2002) suggests that there is an association between family monetary wealth and the health, nutrition, and potential for student academic success. She further mentions that since wealthy persons can afford to purchase textbooks, tutors, good living environments, and private

schools, the children of these parents will have a distinct advantage over the general population. Wealthy students also have access to computers, calculators, better-trained teachers and learning environments that increase the achievement gap (English, 2002).

Along with the advantages that wealth provides, there are other forms of capital that can be exercised by individuals as an advantage over others. When used, these forms of capital have the ability to transfer specific value systems to offspring. For the purposes of this study, I define the term capital as an asset or an advantage that can be accumulated by a person, family, or class of people that can be transmitted to their offspring, which can be used to gain power, influence or material goods. Imbedded in the use of capital are the normative cultural values and ideals of the group or individual exercising the capital. One of the most studied examples of non-monetary capital in education is cultural capital. Cultural capital is a sociological theory founded by Pierre Bourdieu, which describes non-monetary advantages that can be transferred from one generation to another, and usually consists of value structures that allow for the perpetuation of power and influence to remain in the hands of those currently in power (Mickelson 2002).

Examples of cultural capital in education can include the study habits that are taught to children by their parents, the way that children are taught to interact with their teachers and peers in a classroom, what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge is to be achieved, and how knowledge is validated. In the above examples, a student with high cultural capital who is able to take advantage of good study habits is more likely to be academically successful than students that do not have, or were not exposed to the particular skill. Likewise, students that have acquired the skill to understand the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is gained will probably be more successful than students that do not understand these concepts. These students

will pass on their cultural capital to their offspring, allowing a new generation to enjoy the benefits that cultural capital enables.

Another significant form of capital that can be exercised by those in power is social capital. Social capital refers to the networks and relationships that are inherent in society, which hold society together (Field, 2005 as cited by Infed: Informal Education Homepage). It has been argued by critical theorists that persons or organizations in power with a large amount of social capital will be able to use their social networks in order to accomplish individual goals and tasks. Because an individual's social network would be comprised of like-minded persons with the same, shared cultural values, the individuals chances for success in accomplishing tasks would be much higher than a person without tight social networks (Bourdieu, 1983). This allows like-minded persons to cooperate together in being able to affect change positive to their group or class, effectively being able to hold onto existing power or resources more readily (Bourdieu, 1983, Infed, 2005).

As an example of the above, Mickelson (2002) mentions that social capital can play a large part in the success of students, since parents with large amounts of social capital would be more likely to actively network with other like-minded parents in PTA meetings, and be able to solve many educational problems by utilizing persons in his or her social group to collectively solve educational issues. This not only gives the individual an advantage over persons without extensive networks, this also reinforces the shared value systems of those involved in the networking process.

Along with issues of inequality in higher education, international students face many challenges associated with the official rules and regulations imposed by the US government. The following section examines the issues that international students face when entering the US

as a visiting student. This section will focus on the literature surrounding the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the US government's database and tracking mechanism implemented as part of the post-September 11th legislation, designed to protect the US from further terrorist attack, and the many issues it presents to international students.

International Students' Experiences with US Federal Regulations

The issues confronting international students wishing to study in the US can be enormous. International students' first encounters with the US immigration process can also present a challenge. This section explores the topic of entry into the US by international students and examines the areas international students commonly experience discrimination.

This section focuses on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the federal government's tracking system of foreign students. Because all international students are subject to the rules and regulations of this tracking system (which also serves as a common experience for all international students), and because the federal government's regulations concerning the travel of international students between countries for educational purposes, the amount of semester hours required by the government in order to remain in the US, and the limitation on obtaining work are also tracked by SEVIS, the examination of this tool promises to provide the greatest understanding of the context in which international students perceive discrimination within the immigration process.

This section concludes with an examination of the change in policy of the US government in regards to international students including changes to the immigration system, changes to visa regulations, as well as the conflicting messages being sent by legislation passed by the US Congress. This legislation could have wide-ranging implications for the future of

international education in the US, as well as the health of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs throughout the US.

Flawed Implementation of SEVIS

In examining the current literature on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and Immigration, there are several issues that warrant discussion. First, there is evidence that the implementation of SEVIS was flawed, in that the initial implementation was rushed, without the necessary testing, or resources to effectively accomplish its task (Kless, 2004; Greenburg, 2003; Arnone, 2003 b, c). The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was given the task of creating and administering the new computerized database, with a budget of only \$37 million. Over 7,000 schools in the United States were required to have SEVIS up and running before August 1, 2003. This included the purchasing the software, as well as becoming officially certified by a site visit from a DHS contractor.

According to Kless (2004), SEVIS was implemented before being thoroughly tested, resulting in many colleges and universities having to figure out emerging problems on their own, without adequate support. As mentioned by Kless: “Although there have been many improvements, we still struggle daily with inadequate instructions on how to enter required information and apply a one-size-fits-all reporting system to individual students and programs that are anything but alike” (2004, p.2). Likewise, in an article by Greenburg (2003), academic administrators are stated to be anxious of the August 1 deadline because of “computer glitches, unreachable ‘help’ lines, inscrutable instructions, and resistance to correction of errors” (p.1280).

In a review of the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s (INS, precursor to DHS’s Bureau for Citizenship and Immigration Services) efforts to track foreign students in the US, the

United States Department of Justice (2003) released a report detailing the problems encountered due to the haste in which SEVIS was implemented. This report stated that there were technical problems with the software, including password problems at six of the ten district offices of the INS, all of which could not access SEVIS. In four districts, the primary field adjudicators were not even given passwords (p.3). There were also delays due to the lack of INS officers, or duly appointed personnel to conduct the on-site certification of schools. In fact, the INS was cited by the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ), for not “adequately training and supervising the contractors the government uses to visit campuses to ensure that colleges are genuine institutions of higher education... The trainings for the adjudicators--the officials who make the final decision on whether to approve an institution--and inspectors at ports of entry are also insufficient (Arnone, 2003c, quoting the USDOJ’s 2003 follow-up review of INS and SEVIS).

Unfunded Mandate

A second issue with the implementation of SEVIS is that it is was an unfunded mandate, which required schools to spend a significant amount of institutional funds to meet the specific requirements of the DHS. Although not mandatory, many schools had to purchase new software, designate specific persons as “Designated school officials” as a liaison between the school and DHS, and provide resources for training these officials in order to become compliant with DHS regulations. Catherine Pickavet (2003) details the enormous task that schools must undertake to become SEVIS compliant. “First, they must assess their infrastructure and personnel to determine whether outsourcing the systems necessary to interface with the INS database is needed. Universities must also upgrade their existing systems, dipping into their pockets to cover the costs – which could be hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on whether the university implements the program in-house... Universities can do one of three things: buy a

vendor product, working with other agencies to make their own product compliant, or doing something in-house” (p.2). Some smaller schools and community colleges will find the mandates prohibitive, and will be unable to comply completely. “...most are institutions such as community colleges, which don’t have as many financial resources as larger universities, or as much experience dealing with government regulations... schools could be overwhelmed and [are] ill equipped to handle the new system” (Lane, 2002, citing Hartle,T., V.P. for governmental relations, ACE).

Institutional Loss of Income and Knowledge Capital

A third issue prominent in the literature of international education is the loss of income and knowledge capital normally provided by foreign students to American colleges and universities as a direct result of post-September 11th legislation including SEVIS. Since September 11th, the number of foreign students seeking to study in the US has dropped dramatically from 586,323 students to 564,766 (Institute for International Education, 2007). Sylvia Kless, international student advisor at the University of Rochester, explains the hardships institutions face without the normal presence of international students. “If the deterrents to the presence of international students remain unchecked, our country will suffer a significant economic loss -- international students contribute almost \$12 billion annually to our nation’s economy. More importantly, and ironically, we will diminish one of our most effective weapons against terror and fear in the world: international education” (2004, p. b9).

The sharp decline in the numbers of foreign students is especially difficult on programs within the fields of science and engineering. The University of Louisville has seen this decline in the last few years. The department of industrial engineering went from having six “brilliant” Chinese graduate students, all of whom were strong enough to qualify for university fellowships,

to none. The engineering school's enrolment declined by 61 percent in one year (Wilson, 2004). In a survey conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools, out of the 126 institutions surveyed, there was an 18 percent decrease in the amount of foreign students in the fall of 2004, compared to the fall of 2003, the largest percentage of international students coming from China, India and South Korea (Bollag, 2004).

There have also been many cases where international students were prohibited from representing their schools at conferences outside of the US, as well as not being able to reenter the US while representing universities at conferences outside the US (Bollag, 2004; Wilson, 2004; Arnone, 2003a; Johnson, 2003).

Mistakes and Enforcement Problems

The problems universities face with SEVIS do not end once students arrive on campus. Along with the collection of data such as entry and exit dates, failure to enroll, change in legal name or status, courses taken, students are also required to take an equivalent of a full-time course load, which is 12 hours for undergraduates, and 8 hours for graduate students. The rules allow for zero tolerances for lapses in status, with almost no hope of reinstatement (exceptions are made for medical conditions).

The literature contains horror stories of mistakes made by DHS officers, campus officials, or SEVIS itself, which have caused great inconvenience, and in some cases forced deportation for students (Arnone, 2003a; Hoover, 2003; Johnson, 2003). One of the premier cases is that of Yashar Zendeheidel, a student from the Middle East, studying at the University of Colorado at Boulder. While attempting to register with federal authorities, as mandated by the USA PATRIOT Act, he was arrested for visa violations, although all of his papers were in order, and he had a clean record. Federal officers told Zendeheidel that he was in violation because he was

not carrying the mandated 12 hours, as required by SEVIS. Mr. Zendeheidel had previously gone through the procedures necessary to drop a course, and was authorized to do so by his school advisors. However, the federal officials would not contact the school to corroborate his story. Instead, he was handcuffed, placed under arrest, and taken to a detention facility, where he was photographed, fingerprinted, and questioned for hours. After spending several days in a cell, his friends were able to post a \$5,000 bond, and he was released. After the director of the international students office had contacted the immigration agency and had explained that the student had followed the agency's own guidelines, Zendeheidel's case was dismissed (Arnone, 2003a; Hoover, 2003; Johnson, V. 2003). Another case stated by Bollag (2004), involves a Chinese student studying at Minnesota who was giving a scholarly presentation in Canada, and was authorized to leave the country for the conference presentation. The airline employee wrongly took his I-94 card, which was his proof of authorization to study in the US. As a result, had to return to China to wait for a new visa to be approved.

Although the above mentioned cases can be explained as human error, or mistakes in subjective judgment by either DHS official or airline officials, the result for the international student is the same: the student is prevented from continuing their studies. I believe that many of the students mentioned above will find their way back into the American educational system, but will have been changed by the experience of being falsely accused of not complying with US governmental regulations.

Change in US Policy Toward International Students

As this literature review has demonstrated, there have been several regulations that have been imposed upon international students as a result of the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks. However, there is evidence that the US government has been changing its policy on international

education, and has enacted legislation to ease some of the difficulties that international students face as they attempt to complete a college degree in the US, which is detailed below.

There are a growing number of examples that illustrate tentative changes to the system and to the policies and direction of US policy toward foreign students. First, the US State Department's official policy has changed from that of strict enforcement, to one of reasonable enforcement. An example of this can be seen in the way that consular interviews are being conducted for student visas. According to Field, because of university admissions deadlines, all consular sections worldwide are now authorized to give students requesting visas for study in the US priority for interviews (2005). According to the State Department, most students requesting an interview are granted one within one week, and in some cases within two days. The State Department also mentions that the use of SEVIS as a successful tool in weeding out fraudulent visa cases is giving credence and confidence to the visa application process, which in turn, is speeding up the entire process (Harty, 2004).

The DHS has also relaxed its visa requirements for specific categories of foreign students. Students who are under the Visas Mantis program (those students studying in highly sensitive fields such as nuclear science, biomedicine, and computer technology) and who hold an F visa will be permitted to keep their security status for the full length of their programs, for a maximum period of four years (Glenn, 2005). As mentioned above, I see this as an attempt to address the loss of income and knowledge capital experienced by many institutions that rely heavily on the international student population to fill its student ranks.

The US Congress has also authorized a new provision that would lift the current limit of work visas for foreign students allowed to study in the US. Congress is allocating 20,000 new H-1B worker visas specifically for foreign students who have obtained a master's degree or

Ph.D. from an American university. Gravois (2004) explains that this brings the total number of H1-B visas available to international students to reach over 85,000. Gravois also mentions that the first 20,000 applicants for this visa will not have to compete with the general pool of applicants. This provision would enable those foreign students who have studied in the US to work for the businesses in the US for which they have trained, and should also encourage those students who have been frightened away from study in the US to rethink their position to apply (2004).

As a partial result of the actions by the US Congress, applications for student visas have continually risen since the September 11th attacks. According to Field, "...the first six months of 2004, applications for student visas increased by 9 percent over the same period of the previous year, and visa issuances increased by 11 percent..." however, application numbers are still below the 2001 terrorist attacks (2005). More recent data seems to reflect that the initial downturn in students applying for visas to study in the US has been reversed, and that international student numbers are approaching pre-September 11th levels (McCormack, 2007).

Although the numbers of international students applying to study in the US is encouraging, there have been several articles that express concern that the government has overstepped its authority in the attempt to prevent further attacks. Although the US State Department has mentioned that they don't want to lose any students, and are trying to make studying in the US easier for foreign students, there are several articles that seem to indicate the opposite. First, the FBI has been given access to all of the data contained in SEVIS by the DHS. This means that the FBI no longer needs to ask permission of the DHS before conducting investigations on international students (Field, 2004). Higher education advocates worry that the expanded access will lead to abuses, and incorrect interpretations of data. According to Catheryn

Cotton, director of the international office at Duke University, “You always worry whether they are going to interpret the data correctly, which could lead to ‘tragic consequences for students’ if law-enforcement officials acted on them” (as quoted in Field, 2004). I see this as plausible, given the above-mentioned instances of mistakes by US immigration officials.

Another article written by Field addresses the Intelligence-Reform bill (S 2845), which cleared Congress in 2004. This piece of legislation would prohibit the US State Department from exempting more foreign students and scholars from the requirement of a personal interview with a consular officer prior to getting a visa. The language contained in this bill would prevent the State Department from granting exceptions. Victor Johnson, associate executive for NAFSA comments that “the language contained in the bill was very unfortunate because we’ve been working with the State Department over the last year to try to find ways to ease up on the visa restrictions” (2005).

Although the issues highlighted in the above sections seem to suggest that official US governmental regulations surrounding international education have caused a significant decline in the number of foreign students seeking to study in the US, there are signs that the US government is changing its policy towards international students in order to encourage more students to study in the US. In fact, an article published in the Chronicle of Higher Education (McCormack, 2007) mentions that the Fall 2007 semester has seen the first significant increase in the number of international students studying in the US since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks. This number is only 3,339 students less than the all-time high number of international students recorded in 1992, before the implementation of SEVIS. This leads me to believe that the issues pertaining to US governmental regulations over international students are being slowly worked out, and that the outlook for international education in the US will improve.

The next section explores the literature on documented instances of discrimination towards international students. It examines the issues surrounding discrimination, specifically the interactions between international students and their peers and professors within the school environment and interactions between students and the American public. I will also describe some of the prevalent issues that result from the interactions mentioned above.

International Student's Experiences with Discrimination

Perceived Discrimination

When discussing the literature on international students and their experiences with discrimination, there are several areas that warrant attention. First are the negative actions that are perpetrated towards international students. This includes prejudice against persons of a particular country or race, stereotyping of individuals, and other factors that contribute to discrimination (Hanassab, 2006).

According to Feagin and Eckberg (1980), prejudice is motivated by the preference of one's own group, class, or race over those outside the group. Prejudice is also seen as a major factor in the perpetration of discrimination towards others. Feagin and Eckberg also mention that much prejudicial action is conscious, and that racial discrimination translates directly from the conscious actions of prejudiced persons.

According to a study published by Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand (2006) (hereafter referred to as the Victoria University Study), although 41% of foreign students studying in the US mentioned that Americans treated them with dignity, 32% felt that the friendliness was superficial or that their treatment was negative. This study also suggests that prejudice is felt more commonly in groups that are more culturally dissimilar from members of

the host country, and that the longer international students remain in a host country, the more they are likely to perceive prejudice and discrimination.

Schmitt et al. (2003) agree with this, and add, "...being a member of a minority group can have a number of psychological costs. In particular, perceiving that one's minority group is victimized by prejudice and discrimination can harm self-esteem and psychological well-being" (p. 1). Schmitt et al. further mention that stereotyping and discrimination will often cause minorities to join together and identify with each other as a group that has experienced shared rejection.

According to Asmar, Proude and Inge (2004), many of the issues associated with prejudice stem from previously held beliefs about the specific traits of a group or race of people, commonly referred to as stereotyping. Hurtado (1992) suggests that the imbedded ideologies of our educational institutions often lead to the stereotyping of specific individuals (such as minorities having poor work ethics, or that certain races are more conducive to academic achievement, and others more conducive to sports) that would lead to differing perceptions of campus climate by minorities.

In the literature on discrimination towards international students, there are several factors that are attributed to the severity or frequency of incidences against foreigners. Having a foreign appearance and poor English language proficiency are among the two most cited. As an example, Krahe et al. (2005) mention that being associated with particular minority groups can lead to discriminatory actions. This is especially true if a person has physical traits associated with particular groups, such as eye color, skin tone, or hair texture. Those with foreign appearances were consistently documented to have experienced more discrimination than those

whose appearances were more similar to the population of the host country (Hayes & Lin 1994; Hanassab, 2006).

Along with foreign physical traits being associated with discriminatory action, ethnic dress, or religious garb have also been associated with discriminatory actions. Asmar, Proude, and Inge (2004) and Cole & Ahmadi (2003) describe the “Hijab effect,” referring to the scarf worn over the heads of Muslim women as a sign of religious respect. The authors found a significant number of Muslim women felt that wearing the Hijab immediately marked them as dangerous foreigners with terrorist intentions. Instances of the “Hijab effect” have risen sharply since the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks.

Another predictor of the frequency of discriminatory experiences is the fluency of international students with the host language. Krahe et al. (2005), Hayes & Lin (1994) and Met (2001) discuss the issue of language proficiency and discrimination. The researchers agree that a person’s fluency with the host language is a large determining factor in respect to discriminatory experiences. Hays & Lin (1994) and Met (2001) mention that the inability to speak the host language proficiently is a strong barrier to multicultural exchange between the student and native speakers.

The Victoria University study (2006) also mentions that language often acts as a barrier to understanding, especially in the classroom, where lack of familiarity with vocabulary and differences in language abilities are the most common challenge faced by teachers of international students. However, Krahe et al. (2005) did not find a statistically significant overall level of increased discrimination from the population of students they studied, due to language.

Interactions on Campus

As international students enter their educational institutions, they are often faced with numerous challenges in adjusting to their new environments. Although there are many factors that impact an international student's ultimate success at an institution, two of the most commonly cited are the types and quality of interactions with faculty and staff (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Hays & Lin, 1994; Olivas & Li, 2006) and the types and quality of interaction with other students (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; The Victoria University study, 2006).

Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) mention that international students often experience issues in developing relationships with professors and advisors due to language difficulties. They also mention that greater interaction between international students and faculty, both formally and informally, have had a positive effect on educational achievement. The researchers also mention that international students that are able to find advisors who are culturally sensitive, and are willing to help them navigate the American educational system will be significantly more likely to persist through graduation (The Victoria University study, 2006).

The Victoria University study (2006) presents a fascinating look at the role that culture plays on the perceptions of faculty friendliness and quality of interaction. As an example, they cite how most Asian students are not comfortable with the informal nature of the Western classroom. Because of Confucian values, they are less likely to participate in class discussions, due to the perceived "rudeness" of speaking out in class when there is a teacher present.

Due to the cross-cultural differences, many faculty will often misinterpret the actions of students from other cultures, assuming that they are unengaged, under-prepared, unintelligent, or

unmotivated, which can lead to frustration and may lead the professor to form stereotypical opinions of their students, which may lead to prejudicial treatment (Hanassab, 2006).

Hanassab (2006) mentions in her study that up to 21 percent of the students interviewed indicated that they had had a discriminatory experience with their professors. Southeast Asians, Muslims, and African students reported the most instances of discriminatory actions. Most of the perceived discrimination included off-hand remarks about certain countries, not trying to pronounce the names of foreign students properly, being ignored by their professors in class, and derogatory remarks about other religions.

The literature also shows that international students have varying experiences when interacting with students on campus. Hanassab (2006) suggests that a student's country of origin can have an affect on the types of interactions international students have with native students. She mentions that European students report the least amount of discrimination, due to language proficiency and physical characteristics close to the majority population in the US. She also mentions that the highest percentage of discrimination by native students was towards students from the Middle East (22%).

Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) suggest that international students have a more difficult time making friends with the local population, and that cultural differences and stereotypes held by native students often causes acts of discrimination, such as verbal harassment, making fun of an accent, imitating the physical features of students (using fingers to pull the eyelids upwards, mimicking the facial features of Asians). This has had the effect of lowering the number of international student willing to participate in extracurricular activities, or interacting with native students.

The Victoria University study (2006) asked students to rate their perception of their international peers as favorable or not favorable. A majority of students (68.1%) viewed international students as favorable. The study also shows that native students often rely on stereotypes when assessing their international counterparts. Again, country of origin seemed to have a bearing on the frequency of reported discrimination by students. Those from countries with cultures more similar to the US had less encounters with discriminatory actions than those from countries with dissimilar cultures.

Interactions off Campus

One of the prominent issues mentioned by practitioners of International Education (IE) is that many international students have a difficult time adjusting to life in the US, since the culture can be quite different from what the international student is familiar with. Practitioners of IE mention that it is important to differentiate the experiences of international students off campus from on campus experiences, since educational institutions are insulated from many of the social problems that exist in society. It is also important to point out that the student's experience off campus adds to his or her overall view of the experience as a student studying in the US.

As part of qualitative research classes I have taken at the University of New Orleans, I conducted several interviews with Dr. Janice Thomas, director of the international student office at the University of New Orleans, Dr. Debbie Danna, director of international students at Loyola University, and Yadira Diaz, coordinator of the English as a Second Language (ESL) department at Delgado Community College. The three directors mention that international students have very different challenges in their social environments off campus.

Negotiating daily life is considered a significant challenge. Without preexisting support systems in the US, international students must rely on their own skill in order to accomplish

many of the things that native students take for granted. Students must be able to find housing, open bank accounts, find modes of transportation to and from school, purchase needed books and supplies, and develop a geographic sense of their environment. This is often complicated by the lack of proficient language skills or social skills critical to express themselves to the local population. This is also reflected in articles by Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, and Pisecco (2001), and Hayes and Lin, (1994).

The three IE directors mention that due to federal regulations, international students are not allowed to obtain Social Security numbers, which hinders their attempt at obtaining a driver's license, opening a checking account, or trying to purchase items such as a cellular phone. Even though a Social Security number is not always required in the above instances, many clerks or officials working in the offices above do not have correct information, and will often hassle an international student who does not have a Social Security number.

The three IE directors mentioned that their students often had negative encounters with the local population. Many of their students experienced situations that made them uncomfortable, such as the unwarranted stares from individuals, or negative comments directed towards them because of their dress or appearance.

The limited literature in this area seems to corroborate the claims of the IE directors. In her study of international students at the University of California Los Angeles, Shideh Hanassab (2006) mentions that the students in her study had the highest incidences of discrimination and racism outside the UCLA campus, in the Los Angeles area as opposed to experiencing discrimination on campus. She explains that many of the students experienced hostility for looking like foreigners (having foreign physical features), and suffered intolerance from strangers. As an example, Hanassab mentions a Turkish student that was hassled when trying to

rent an apartment because the landlord did not want any pets in the apartment. When the students mentioned that he did not have any pets, the landlord asked him: "...so what are you planning to do with your camel?" (p.165). Other Middle Eastern students were asked how many wives would be living with them.

Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) also mention that overt discrimination was much more of a problem outside of campus. As an example, students with physical or linguistic characteristics that were considered foreign suffered significantly more incidences than students with European features or traits. Particularly after the September 11th terrorist attacks, Middle Eastern students received many comments such as "Damn terrorists, go back to your country..." (p.37).

Although the literature on discrimination towards international students is extremely limited, there is a growing body of literature that highlights the instances of discrimination towards the international students population. Even more important, recent studies by Bonazzo, & Wong (2007), Hanassab (2006), Hsieh (2007), Olivas & Li (2006), and Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) seem to indicate that many of the difficulties that international students experience can be attributed to discrimination. The studies also seem to show that the interactions between students and their peers and professors, as well as the interactions between students and the American populations can lead to discriminatory experiences, which would certainly affect the students view of his or her educational experience.

The following section details the major themes that are present in the literature that are attributed to the experiences of discrimination towards international students.

Major Themes Surrounding Discrimination and International Students

When examining several new studies conducted on international students and their experiences with discrimination, several interesting themes seem to emerge from the literature.

First, the studies of Hanassab (2006), Hsieh (2007), Olivas & Li (2006), and Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) demonstrate that international students often undergo certain adjustment issues due to a lack of familiarity with the host country, issues with the English language, and the inability to develop friends from within peer groups. The above authors posit that when international students are faced with instances of discrimination while trying to adjust to being in a foreign country, many students will experience a loss of identity. Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, Pisecco (2001) add that many students will often “experience a profound sense of loss, especially social loss, when they go to another country...Students feel less confident, sense constant tension, take less time off, and become confused over how to have fun...” (p. 54). They suggest that the social loss experienced by international students become a major barrier to the adjustment of students, which causes homesickness, self-esteem issues, and the risk of dropping out of school.

Hsieh (2007) describes another major affect that discrimination has on international students. He posits that instances of discrimination cause students to withdraw from social networks, leaving them “voiceless and invisible” (p. 1). Due to the Eurocentric ideology and cultural homogeneity present in American culture, those unwilling or unable to fit into the mold of the dominant culture will experience being ignored. Hsieh also mentions that international students often feel invisible in the classroom due to the lack of proficiency in English, which causes the students to be overlooked by their professors and peers during classroom discussion. This view is also shared by Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington and Pisecco (2001).

According to Hanassab (2006), Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), Hayes and Lin (1994), Charles and Stewart (1991), and Feagin and Eckberg (1980), one of the most prevalent issues faced by international students resulting from discriminatory experiences is an overwhelming

sense of stress. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) describe the added stress that instances of discrimination pile on top of the already stressful adjustment period that international students face. Students often perceive added stress when encountering rude sales clerks, intolerant citizens, law enforcement, and local bureaucratic requirements, which Poyrazli and Grahame posit presents a major barrier to student success (2007).

The next section introduces my conceptual framework, and is based upon the literature review above. Because of the issues presented by practitioners of IE, and the issues of discrimination experienced by their students, and the issues I have taken from the literature, I present a model constructed to address the major areas of concern detailed in the literature review. I hope that this model can be used to frame the continued systematic research into international students' experience with discrimination.

Original Conceptual Framework

As described in the literature review, although there is a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting that international students experience a degree of discrimination when in the US, there have been only a few studies in this area that seem to confirm this (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Feagin & Eckberg, 1980). There is currently scant literature examining the topic of international student discrimination qualitatively. More importantly, I do not see any of the above authors presenting a conceptual framework model in the literature for the continued systematic study of discrimination towards the international student population. I see this as a major gap in the existing methods and procedures for researching discrimination that if not addressed, might hinder the progress for continued studies in this area.

After careful review of the existing literature on international students and discrimination, I have determined that there are three major areas of significance where international students experience discrimination. In my opinion, the literature suggests that the student's experience with federal regulations, the student's interaction with faculty, staff, and students on campus, and the student's encounters and experiences with Americans outside of the school environment are the three primary areas that are significant in the discussion on discrimination towards international students.

The conceptual framework model illustrates the areas where the literature indicates that discrimination has taken place, and its affect on the student's view of their educational experience. The completed framework also shows the indirect influence that each of the three main areas have on each other (see figure 1).

Inserted between each main topic area and the students' view of their educational experience are instances of discrimination. These areas are linked together by a solid line, indicating that direct discrimination has occurred, and that there has been a change in the perception of the international student's experience in the US.

I use the three areas mentioned above as the major pillars of my conceptual framework. The areas from the literature that suggest international students experience discrimination are from the areas of federal regulations (leg 1), student interactions with their peers and faculty (leg 2), and student interactions off campus (leg 3).

At first glance, it would seem possible to group two of the areas mentioned in the literature under a major heading entitled *Student Interactions*. The literature is quite clear that the issues presented on campus such as interactions with professors, interactions with other students, stereotyping, and cross-cultural differences have different implications for international

students educationally (since the issues presented infer power differentials that could affect the student's success in an educational program), than the issues of discrimination when interacting with the general public.

Furthermore, the interactions off campus dealing with daily life have different implications for international students. Hanassab (2006), Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), Hayes and Lin (1994) and Feagin and Eckberg (1980) mention that incidents of discrimination are likely to occur more frequently in social situations, and due to the cultural homogeneity present in American culture. Because international students often dress differently, or look physically different from Americans, the potential for negative interactions with Americans is always present. According to Lee (2006), these encounters are often violent in nature, and can lead to instances of physical or verbal assault. Because I see these two areas as distinct and separate, I am suggesting that each be given a separate leg in the conceptual framework model.

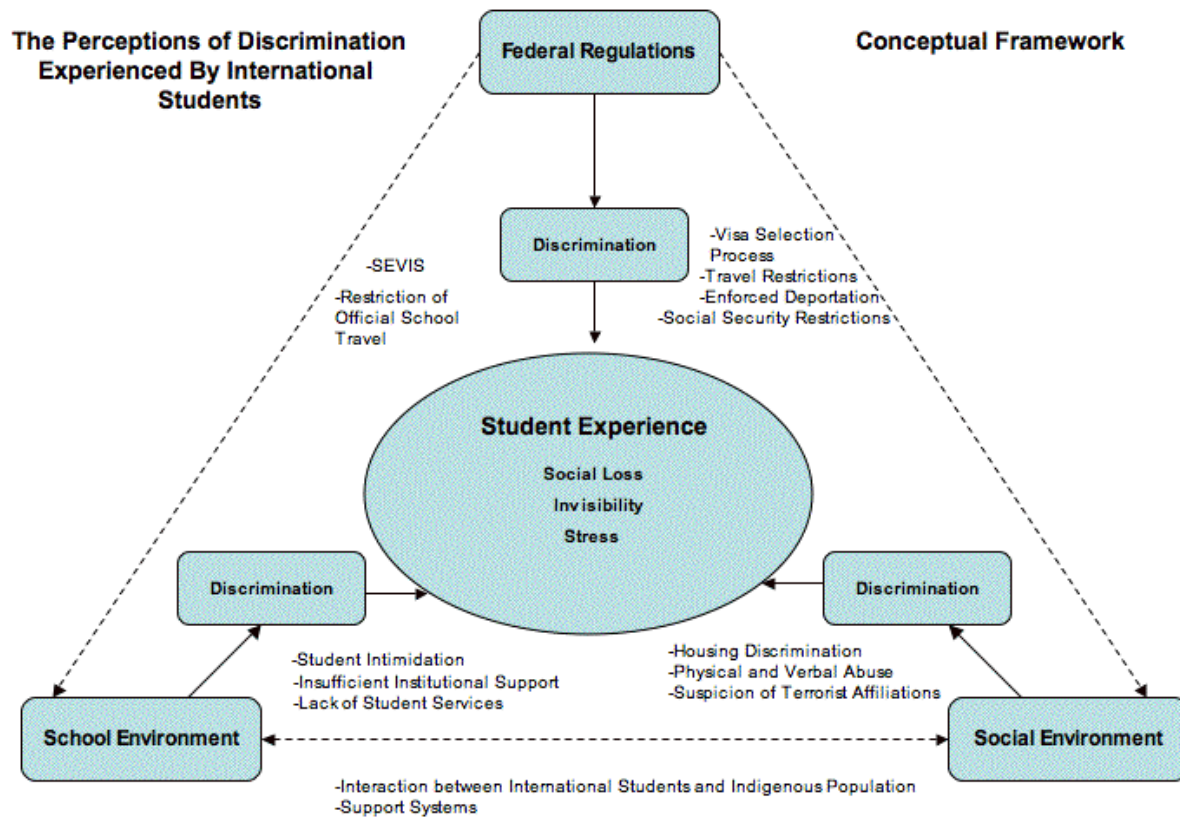
I have listed some of the above issues pertaining to discrimination that stem from the relationships that exist between the three areas next to the dotted lines linking the areas. Some examples include intimidation of students from the faculty and other students, perceived unequal treatment by faculty and professional staff, insufficient institutional support (Charles & Stewart, 1991; The Victoria University study, 2006), and the lack of student services issues (Hays & Lin, 1994; Olivas & Li, 2006) to illustrate major issues from the interactions on campus.

The issues pertaining to discrimination from the social environment include housing discrimination, the inability to access government services (obtaining a Social Security card or US driver's license), physical and verbal assault, and the general suspicion of being a terrorist (racial profiling).

The center of the conceptual framework model represents the student's perception of his or her educational experience, and the academic impact towards international students that may accompany instances of discrimination. According to Charles and Stewart (1991), The Victoria University study (2006), Hays and Lin (1994) and Olivas and Li, (2006), the common issues that confront international students that have experienced instances of discrimination are a sense of social loss or loss of identity, the feeling of invisibility, and the stress of having to negotiate the educational process in as a foreigner in a sometimes inhospitable land. When added to the stresses that domestic students commonly face, discrimination may have an affect on the persistence of international students. Tinto (1997) seems to agree with this, and discusses the importance of both social and academic integration as factors of educational success and persistence.

I am proposing to use this conceptual framework model as a standard tool for the qualitative study of discrimination towards international students. The formal conceptual framework should allow for the systematic study of the phenomenon of discrimination towards international students, and give researchers a formal tool to anchor future studies. This framework should also allow for a rich in-depth qualitative inquiry into discrimination towards international students, in order to augment the current quantitative literature in this area, allowing future researchers to better understand the breadth and depth of data related to discrimination towards international students.

Figure 1



Peter L. Cho Fall 2007

The following chapter (Methodology) examines the procedural elements used in carrying out a qualitative inquiry into the phenomenon of discrimination towards international students.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

This chapter presents the methods I used to conduct this research study. I have organized this chapter into three major areas. The first section demonstrates the rationale for selecting the qualitative paradigm to conduct the study. Included in this section are overarching research goals, research questions and the specific reasons for using qualitative inquiry, specifically the phenomenological framework used to guide the study. Particular issues stemming from this type of inquiry such as the role of the researcher, researcher bias, and methods used to validate the data are also discussed.

The second section of this chapter illustrates the specific issues involved in the data collection process including the selection of research sites, gaining access to the target population, the selection of the standard interview as the data gathering method, and the methods used to record the data.

The third section describes the data analysis procedures I used to make sense of the raw data that was acquired from the interviewing process. I describe the process of examining the raw transcript data for emerging themes, and how I assigned major themes a specific code word in order to track the incidences of the theme throughout the verbatim transcripts. I also describe the creation of a master “code-key” which lists all of the major themes together, along with the changes that I made to the code-key as I reviewed the transcript data multiple times.

Research Goals

Due to the limited coverage of discrimination towards international students in the literature, it was the intent of this study to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon by examining the main issues that are lacking in current studies as mentioned in the literature review, namely the lack of a qualitative voice in existing literature. Since most of the studies on

discrimination and international students have been quantitative in nature (Hanassab, 2006; Krahe, Abraham, Felber, & Helbig, 2005; Mickelson, 2002), I believe that there is a lack of depth in exploring how international students perceive and react to discrimination.

As a secondary goal, I hope to propose the revised conceptual framework model discussed in chapter five as a formal tool in conducting future research in the area of discrimination towards international students. It is hoped that this framework will aid practitioners of IE by focusing research towards the areas and issues of significance that seem to affect international students most frequently. This will also allow practitioners of IE to examine their own student's issues from within the framework, developing strategies that may help international students cope with the uncertainties of studying in a new country.

Research Questions

In this study, I sought to answer the following primary question:

How do international students define and perceive discrimination?

Secondary questions include:

1. How does the student react to an incident of discrimination?
2. How does the student's perception of discrimination shape the view of their educational experience in the US, specifically the view of their teachers, fellow students, and their school?
3. How does the student's perception of discrimination shape their view of Americans?
4. What can researchers and practitioners of International Education do to diminish the affects of discrimination towards international students?

Qualitative Inquiry

As mentioned in the forward to this study, my interest in researching discrimination qualitatively evolved from the personal experiences I had with international students in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. After interviewing several of my former students for earlier research classes in the UNO doctoral program in Educational Administration, I found myself questioning whether or not the actions of the terrorists and the subsequent media coverage of the US government's response were affecting the daily lives of my students. I also wondered if post September 11th legislation had affected international education as a whole.

My primary research goal was to deepen my understanding of the context from which my students perceived that the US government, US citizens and/or American educational institutions discriminated against them because they were foreigners. I also hoped to be able to develop a new framework that would help researchers in this area organize the many different issues and themes that surrounds this topic.

In order to better understand the lived experiences of international students with discrimination, I needed to be able to understand the phenomenon of discrimination in the naturalistic setting from which it normally occurs. Creswell (2003, 1998) and Maxwell (2005) mention the best way to answer research questions concerning specific phenomenon, or a specific population within a naturalistic setting is to use the qualitative paradigm. This allows researchers the opportunity to gather the rich data that emerges from within a specific context, allowing for exploration in great depth by the use of purposeful sampling techniques in gaining access to a population that can best answer research questions.

When examining my research study from a wide view, several of Maxwell's (2005) primary goals of qualitative research are satisfied. I am first and foremost trying to understand

how students perceive discrimination, and how it influences their life experiences in the US (the meaning). I want to know if they attach any significant meaning to the perceived discriminatory actions of others.

I also want to understand the context in which the students feel that they are experiencing discrimination. I want to know the in-depth surroundings of their experience. Did customs officials, professors, citizens, or the system itself treat them poorly? Was their experience complicated due to a language barrier or other forms of miscommunication? Were there other environmental factors such as place or time of day that may have led to the experience?

Lastly, the need for my design to be flexible was important to me. I anticipated that the data gathered might have suggested different interpretations to the existing themes in the literature, as well as generated new and conflicting themes that cannot be addressed with a fixed-design structure.

Phenomenology

For this study, I was particularly interested in how my research population of students made sense out of the experience of discrimination, and how they used their experience to generate meaning in their individual lives. Creswell (1998) mentions “a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about the concept or the phenomenon” (p.51).

In order to examine the essence of the phenomenon of perceived discrimination, I conducted detailed interviews with international students that have experienced discrimination first-hand. Because discrimination is not readily observed in the naturalistic environment, i.e. it is difficult to predict when and where discrimination will occur, or when specific persons will experience discrimination, I needed to employ a method that allowed me to understand the

phenomenon of discrimination through indirect means. This was accomplished through the interview process. Creswell (2003) describes the interview process as being an excellent tool in allowing the researcher to understand a phenomenon or other experience without directly observing the phenomenon.

One of the interesting things I have discovered about phenomenology is that there are varying opinions as to the proper procedure in conducting such an inquiry. According to Creswell, an essential part of conducting a phenomenological study includes a strong familiarity with the philosophical precepts of phenomenology (1998). Patton (2002) also explains how phenomenological inquiry evolved from the works of Husserl, Shultz, and Merleau-Ponty, all philosophers from the phenomenological tradition. He does not, however stress the need to be as fully absorbed in the philosophical tradition as Creswell suggests. For this study, I was inclined to follow the lead that Creswell suggests, and immersed myself in the literature, which gave me to a more concise and stable foundation in which to conduct the study.

Role of the Researcher in a Phenomenological Study Emphasizing Critical Theory

As in many forms of qualitative research, the role of the researcher moves beyond just being an objective observer (Patton, 2002). As a qualitative researcher, I bring my biases and preferences to the study. To truly understand the phenomenon of discrimination, I needed understand my biases, and use them to help me better understand my role in this process.

Because of my interest in critical theory and social justice, my role as a researcher takes on a decidedly purposeful tone. In critical theory, it is incumbent upon the researcher to conduct research for the purpose of actively addressing the inequalities that are present in society (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Critical theory researchers have an obligation to illuminate the inequities within educational systems that are based upon the normative culture of those in power

(the oppressors). It is also the job of critical theory researchers to inform persons who are members of the oppressed group of the inequities that exist. It is the obligation of critical theory researchers to actively pursue equity, using the “illumination” as a springboard for social justice. In this study, I attempt to address the inequalities that result from discrimination towards international students that is reflected in the current literature and interviews with directors of international education (discussed below). This dissertation is also my attempt to fulfill my obligations as a researcher that believes in the critical theory and social justice paradigms. By using critical reflection and acting upon that reflection (by conducting this study), I am fulfilling both the reflective aspect, and the action aspect of Paulo Freire’s praxis.

Researcher Bias

As a qualitative researcher, my job as an interviewer requires me to be an active participant in the interviewing process. Because of this, I needed to be keenly aware of the biases I bring to the study. As an educator, I believe that all students should have an equal chance for a quality education, and that intolerance of others has no place in the academic world. I also believe that professors have a responsibility to ensure that their classroom environments are safe areas, as free from intolerance as possible.

Second, I am a proponent of social justice. I believe that all persons have the same right to basic human needs and their fair share of society’s benefits. I also believe that it is the responsibility of our government and educational systems to make sure that there is a level of equality in the social, political, and economic policies of the US and educational institutions.

Third, I believe that dialogue on race, multiculturalism, and the differences in culture and racism needs to be a permanent part of the educational landscape. I am an advocate of multicultural education and multicultural understanding, so I bring this particular bent to my

research study. Because these biases inform the way I approach research and my research agenda, I employed several specific procedures to keep these biases from affecting the objectivity of my study and the data gathered.

In order to keep these biases from affecting the objectivity of my study, I used several methods to insure that the data gathered, and the conclusions that I developed were both credible, and as free from researcher bias as possible. I used different methods to verify the objectivity of the data gathered including the use of peer de-briefers, comparing themes between subjects, and the use of triangulation in different stages of the study.

Verification

One major issue that presents itself when conducting qualitative inquiry is making sure that the data collected and the conclusions induced from the data have a strong sense of credibility and trust-worthiness. The term validity is often used to depict this aspect of a scholarly study.

Several authors, Creswell (1998), Patton (2002) and Maxwell (2005), discuss the importance of credibility when conducting a scholarly study. All three of the authors mention that the term validity is most often associated with the quantitative paradigm, and is not the best term to use when conducting a qualitative study. Because data generated in the qualitative paradigm involves the lived experiences of individuals, the three authors prefer to use the term verification, as it implies that the methods used in qualitative studies can have the necessary rigor, while still preserving the individual's valid experiences. The methods I used for verification included cross-referencing (triangulation) and peer debriefing.

I cross-referenced the themes that emerged from the data with the themes that have been examined in the literature review. I also cross-referenced the different instances of these themes

and compared them between the transcripts of the different students interviewed in this study through several rounds of data coding. In the case where the initial group of students chosen to participate in the study ended up being from different countries, I also looked for similarities or differences that may have been due to the country of origin of the students (cross-referencing the themes between the students to allow for cultural differences).

In order to keep my biases from overtly affecting the findings of my study, I solicited the help of other scholars in international education, as well as peer de-briefers to check for instances of bias in my findings and discussion chapter.

Gaining Trust

One of the most important considerations that I can extend to the subjects of my interview is the issue of trust. As mentioned in Patton (2002), in order to gain the trust of the individuals being interviewed, one must guarantee several specific things. First, one must protect the interview subject from harm. Although my study did not expose the subjects to physical harm, there potentially might have been instances where specific questions about the student's experiences with discrimination would have been emotionally painful. It was important that I conveyed to the students that he or she could terminate the interview process and discontinue their participation in the study, at any point, without any negative repercussions.

I also made sure that the participants were aware that all of the conversations we had were strictly confidential, and that all efforts were made to make sure that none of the data would be able to be personally linked to them. To help insure this, I asked each student to suggest an alias for the study, which insured that the student understood that the data was only to be used for this particular study. I also assured them that all tapes and transcripts would be kept under

lock and key, available only to the researcher, and would be disposed of properly as specified in the research protocol, once the study was completed.

In order to gain the initial trust of the interviewee, I presented the student with several documents that included a letter of introduction (Appendix A) and a consent form (Appendix B) that detailed the purpose and methods for the data collection process.

As a part of the informed consent process, the student participant was assured that he or she would have a chance to discuss the data I have collected, and would also be able to participate in a debriefing session, allowing the student to dispute any of the findings, and to help me understand how my conclusions might be different than his or hers. I intended to do this so that I not only fully understood the student's point of view, but also to help insure the validity of the gathered data in my study.

Finally, I needed to make sure that my internal biases, or world-views did not compromise this study. I needed to be careful in not developing the study only to validate my worldviews, or only select data that supported my current viewpoints. This was especially important when it came to selecting the interviewees, since I intended on using the purposeful sampling technique, and that all subjects will have had experienced at least one major instance of perceived discrimination. It might have been tempting to only select students that would have supported my preconceived theories or world-views, which would have compromised the study before it began. In order to prevent this, I worked extensively with my peer de-briefers to ensure that all of the questions and criteria for student selection were as free from bias as possible. I openly discussed my preconceived biases and world-views with them, so that they were able to recognize my personal biases from within the confines of the study, and alert me to them. This

helped to insure that I was not being deceptive to either the student or to myself when gathering the data for my study.

Study Limitations

Although this study has the potential to validate several of the major issues concerning international students and their experience with discrimination within the literature, there are several limitations to the study that might be significant. First, the relatively small number of the participant group prevents generalizations from being made when examining the themes that will emerge from the data. Using the purposeful sampling method allowed me to access the population of student that will have had discriminatory experiences, and insured that the data gathered was be meaningful to this study. However, care was needed to guard against selecting students that would only serve to validate my conceptual framework, rather than generate objective data.

Another limitation of this study is that it was conducted solely with students from public institutions in the Southeast Louisiana area. Because the cultures of public and private institutions tend to differ widely, I believe that the data gathered from the public institutions might differ significantly from the data gathered at private institutions. Given the differences in the countries of origin and other factors such as SES, cultural capital, and habitus of the students normally attracted to private institutions, I would expect private school students to have different life experiences, thus different perceptions of discrimination, and ultimately a different overall opinion of their stay in the US, compared with the students used in this study.

Conducting this study in Southeast Louisiana, so soon after a major natural disaster (Hurricane Katrina) may also add to the limitations of this study. Due to the change in demographics, specifically the migration of the indigenous population away from the study area,

and the influx of many Mexican and Central American laborers to the area, the attitudes of the remaining population may have been affected. Psychological issues stemming from the storm and its recovery may have changed the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the indigenous persons remaining in the study area. This might change the level of tolerance for cultural differences within the local population, and change their opinions of international students.

Institutional Review Boards

For this dissertation study, I was required to submit a proposal of my study to two separate institutional review boards (IRB) before being allowed to proceed with the study. I first submitted a draft of the project to the IRB at the University of New Orleans in order to undertake the study officially as part of the doctoral program. I successfully submitted the paperwork to the UNO IRB, and received confirmation to proceed on April 2, 2008 (Appendix C). The UNO IRB also required that I successfully complete a course on Human Subjects sponsored by the National Institutes of Health to insure that I had been informed about ethical issues and proper protocol regarding human subjects experiments. The completion certificate is included in the appendix section (Appendix D)

In addition, I was required by one of the institutions included in the study (CCSL) to submit a copy of my UNO IRB proposal to their committee for review. I was also asked to appear before the CCSL IRB to explain the purpose and scope of the project. After verbal questioning by the CCSL IRB, I was granted permission to undertake the study at their location (Appendix E).

Collection of Data

Purposeful Sampling

Several authors of qualitative research (Creswell 1998, 2003; Maxwell 2005; Patton 2002) mention the use of a particular sampling technique known as *Purposeful Sampling* as a major tool in qualitative inquiry. This technique utilizes specific criteria such as a pre-existing condition, experience with certain phenomenon, or membership in a specific organization to select individuals for a research project.

In qualitative inquiry, specifically in a phenomenological study, in order to understand a specific phenomenon, a researcher must purposefully seek out persons that have experienced the phenomenon in order to obtain more information about the phenomenon to be studied. In this study, I decided to employ the purposeful sampling technique by selecting gatekeepers at each research site that were familiar with their population of international students, and could recommend specific students for my study, based upon prior experience with discrimination (discussed below in detail). Due to the nature of this sampling process, the randomness of a sample that is desired in quantitative studies for generalization is not achieved, nor is it desired.

Site Selection

According to Creswell (1998) and Maxwell (2005), when conducting a phenomenological study, it is important to seek out individuals that have experienced the specific phenomenon that is being studied. Although individuals may be located at a single site, the two authors suggest that multiple sites may be necessary in order to gain the needed numbers of participants that have experienced the phenomenon to be studied.

For this study, I purposefully targeted two public colleges in the Southeast Louisiana area that have a substantial numbers of international students. These institutions are Louisiana Public

University (LPU) and the Community College of Southeast Louisiana (CCSL) (both pseudonyms).

As part of the entry process, Creswell (1998) and Patton (2002) suggest developing a rapport with members of the target population to act as a gatekeeper, or negotiator between the researcher and the target population. In addition to negotiating the entry process, both authors mention that the gatekeeper is often helpful in selecting members of the population for study, and may also provide valuable feedback on the data gathering process as well as the instruments used for the interviews. For this study, I contacted LPU's Director of International Students, and the coordinator CCSL's English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

I scheduled an initial meeting with the two directors separately to explain the purpose of my study, and asked them to participate in my study. After familiarizing the two directors with my study, I asked them to help me select students from their programs that fit the project's criteria. The same procedures were used in a pilot study (Pre-Dissertation) to help determine the effectiveness of such procedures for an official dissertation research project.

In the pre-dissertation, I choose a target of 4-6 students for interview. Since It was determined that the purposeful sampling method would be needed to gather the necessary data, and that the two gatekeepers were the most familiar with the experiences of their students, the two gatekeepers agreed to help me select students for the project using the purposeful sampling technique. Because of the success of the technique used in the pilot study, I chose to use the same technique to gain access to the population in my dissertation study, described after the institutional profiles listed below.

Institutional Profile: Louisiana Public University

The first institution that participants were selected from for inclusion in this study was Louisiana Public University. Louisiana Public University (LPU) is classified as an urban public four-year Carnegie Doctoral/Research Intensive institution serving the southeast Louisiana population. The average student enrollment is 12,000 (3,000 graduate and 9,000 undergraduate). A majority of the student population comes from Louisiana, with only 9.1 percent of students coming from other states or other countries. There are 526 full-time faculty and 172 part-time faculty members with approximately 80 percent of the faculty holding doctoral degrees. The student-faculty ratio is 18:1 (Louisiana Public University Website, 2008).

The total number of international students at LPU is approximately 669, with 90 Intensive English students, 53 Optional Practical Training students, and 526 international students within the general LPU student population. The countries with the largest student populations at LPU are China (92), India (60), Honduras (44) and Ecuador (30) (Open Doors, 2007; LPU Website, 2007)

Institutional Profile: Community College of Southeast Louisiana

The second institution where participants were selected for inclusion in this study was Community College of Southeast Louisiana. Community College of Southeast Louisiana (CCSL) is classified as an urban public two-year Carnegie Associate Degree granting institution. CCSL serves as the oldest public community college in Louisiana, opening in 1921. It currently serves approximately 14,000 degree-seeking students from six surrounding parishes, and services over 9,500 students in its non-credit workforce development area.

A majority of the student population (68.9%) is female. The average age of a CCSL student is 24. Most students at CCSL are classified as continuing students (rather than first-time freshmen, or transfer) (CCSL Final Enrollment Report, 2007).

There are three recognized campuses of CCSL, along with a school of nursing campus, and many community outreach centers in neighboring parishes. CCSL is also responsible for several campuses of the Louisiana Technical College in Region 1 define.

There are currently 345 full-time faculty and 371 part-time faculty, with 9% holding doctoral degrees. There are also 378 support staff and administration at CCSL.

The total number of international students attending CCSL is 136, with a majority coming from: Vietnam, Turkey, Honduras, Uzbekistan, and Japan. Approximately 92% are attending CCSL for the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The remaining students are enrolled in various academic disciplines, pursuing an associate degree. (CCSL Final Enrollment Report, 2007).

Gaining Access to the Population

In order to collect the data for this study, I collaborated with the Director of International Students from Louisiana Public University, and the Director of English as a Second Language (ESL) at the Community College of Southeast Louisiana to purposefully select a specific number of students to participate in my study. The target size of the student participant group was 10 students. This number was chosen based upon the results that emerged from the student numbers used in the pilot study (pre-dissertation) of this research project. Because of the number of students in the pilot study revealed significant findings, I believe that doubling the number of participants from the pilot study would better allow me to cross reference specific themes that

emerged between the different interviews, which might lend a deeper insight into the students' experiences.

In order to gain access to the population of international students, the following procedure was followed. The consent form and tentative interview instrument (Appendix F) was sent to each of the IE directors for examination. Once the instruments had been examined by the IE directors to familiarize them with my study, both IE directors agreed to screen their population of international students for candidates that met the research project's criteria, to be interviewed by myself. I met with both directors separately to discuss the list of possible students and how their experiences may shed insight into the study.

Initial contact with the students at LPU and CCSL was made via an introductory email sent by each IE director to the selected international students from their list. The email informed the students that I would be contacting them through email, inviting them to participate in the study. After receiving my email, those students that were interested in participating in the study were directed to contact me either by email or phone, where we discussed the project in general terms. Several of the students declined to participate after the initial contact.

After the initial exchange, the students who agreed to participate in the interview process were emailed several documents including the procedures of the interview process along with a few general questions pertaining to the study. Once the students had viewed the materials and had consented to participate, a date, time and location was determined for the actual interviews. I discussed the consent form and the concept of informed consent with each student, and asked the student to sign the form at the beginning of our meeting, before the actual interview took place. This was done so that all of the questions and concerns of the student were addressed before commencing with the interview.

Method of Data Collection

For this study, I conducted what Patton (2002) refers to as a series of semi-structured open-ended interviews. In this type of interview, I presented the interviewee a series of questions for him or her to answer in a specific sequence. This process was repeated identically for all of the interviews, to minimize the variations in the questions that I asked. The questions were open-ended in nature allowing the interviewee to elaborate on his or her experiences with discrimination, as well as allowing me to probe deeper with follow-up questions when the need arose.

The interviews to lasted from 30 to 45 minutes, with some lasting longer when it was necessary to ask follow-up questions. All interviews were recorded onto a Hard Disk Field Recorder, for future transcription. This device allowed the recorded interview audio to be transferred directly to a computer for storage and duplication, and did not require additional steps to translate the audio from one format to another. I also had a backup audio recorder on-hand in the case of malfunction of the field recorder. Supplies such as extra batteries, extra HD cards, and microphones were also on hand, in case of malfunction. All recording instruments were tested prior to the beginning of each interview to insure that all were in working condition.

Special steps were taken to insure that all interviewees were comfortable, and did not object to being interviewed. All students were briefed about the project, and given the opportunity to discuss any concerns about the interview before the taping began. The students were asked to select an alternate name (pseudonym) to protect their identity and privacy. Interviewees were also informed that they could stop the interview at any time, discontinuing their participation with the project without repercussion.

Methodological Research Journal

One of the tools that I used extensively while conducting this study was a methodological research journal. As I began to organize this study, I realized that documenting my thoughts and procedures as I conducted the study might help me during the data analysis phase of the project. I decided to create an electronic journal to record all of my thoughts as well as procedures as I conducted the study. I also used this journal to make notes to myself, especially when I thought that there were themes emerging from the data, or if the data suggested implications for future research.

I found this journal to be extremely useful when attempting to make the connections between the data gathered and the discussion section in Chapter five. I also found that keeping this journal allowed me to more clearly see some of the important ties between critical theory and my conceptual framework, which ultimately caused me to make several important changes to the final conceptual framework model.

Data Analysis

Pre-Analysis Issues

Before starting formal analysis on the data that I gathered via the interviews, there were several things that I needed to take into account. First, both Creswell (1998), and Patton (2002) suggest that analysis actually occurs far before the data collection process is completed. Both authors mention that the act of collecting data will generate ideas, themes, and patterns that will emerge in the process of conducting interviews. Even the formation of research questions is an attempt to frame a study in order to gather specific types of data.

To take into account this pre-analysis information, I examined my field notes, memos, informal summaries written during the interview process several times, to help identify and

develop some preliminary ideas and themes before attempting to analyze the transcript data. I also recorded these preliminary themes and ideas in the research journal mentioned above. This helped me in identifying some of the major points that I used to develop my initial and subsequent code-keys (discussed below).

Overview of Analysis Procedures

When starting formal analysis, there are four steps that are suggested by Patton (1998) and Creswell (2002), which I used in analyzing the data for my study. First, the data needs to be organized and managed by using different methods. The device I used to record sound data was a digital tape recorder that automatically stores the sound files as MP3 files. This allowed me to conveniently transfer the files from the digital tape recorder to my computer for storage, as well as transfer the files to a backup disc. Once on the computer, I stored the files together under a specific folder on the hard drive in order to keep all of the study materials in one place. I used these sound files to generate verbatim transcripts, which were used as the main data for this study.

In order to capture the context and subtle inflections that were present within our discussions, I felt it necessary to transcribe all sounds on the tape, including coughs, stutters, pauses, and external noises such as the ringing of cell phones. I also transcribed the sentences verbatim, without correcting for syntax or grammar. I believe that this gave the transcripts a more authentic feel, which helped me better understand the interviewee, and his or her life experiences.

The second step in data analysis for a phenomenological study is to organize and read through the data multiple times, each time making notes about the themes that seem to emerge from the data, highlighting relevant passages that illustrate the specific phenomenon, and

developing a series of codes that represent the themes that will be used as the basis for discussions section.

After transcribing each interview verbatim, I collected all of the field notes and summaries that were written during each interview, and placed them in separate manila folders along with a copy of the interview transcript. Each of the folders included a data summary sheet attached to the front, which included the student's name and demographic information. Space was also included on the sheet to list the main codes and themes that emerged from the data analysis.

I also developed a "code-key" (Appendix G) that listed the major themes that emerged from the data during the coding process. This was refined and updated after each of the seven subsequent round of analysis of the transcript data. In the first four rounds of coding, I read through the transcripts and highlighted all of the pertinent passages and themes that emerged. In each round, I would refine the resulting themes as needed, taking into account my interpretation of the data from the last reading. As an additional step for the final three rounds of coding, I extrapolated each individual theme from each transcript, and placed them on a separate "themes" sheet (Appendix H). This allowed me to compare every instance of each theme from all the transcripts, which allowed me to analyze each theme across-case (triangulation of results). In doing this, I gained a deeper understanding of each overall theme, as well as how each theme supported the study's research questions.

Once I felt that I had exhausted each theme's potential, I transferred the main ideas to the front covers of each of the interview transcript's folders for use in developing the reporting of the data, and the discussion of the themes and implications which follow in chapter four (findings), and chapter five (discussion of the findings).

The third step of data analysis involves my interpretation of the data. According to Creswell (1998), I need to explain the meaning of the phenomenon, and how I interpret the phenomenon within the framework of the study. I accomplished this by returning to the above-mentioned instances in the transcripts that I highlighted concerning the subject's interactions with the phenomenon. In order to connect the data from the interviews with the research goals and questions, I used the original model of the conceptual framework presented in chapter two with verbatim quotes from the students' interviews that illustrate the major themes and issues discussed in the literature review.

Another important issue with the interpretation of the data for this study involved incorporating some of the major issues from critical theory into the development of themes for the findings and discussions chapter. I found myself wrestling with this for quite some time. Eventually, after reviewing my reflective journal (and doing some serious reflection), I decided to group the themes that emerged into what Arnowitz and Giroux (1991) describe as "sites of struggle" (p.89), which allowed me to group the student's experiences into three distinct "arenas." This allowed me to modify the original conceptual framework model to take into account the new data that emerged from the study. This also allowed me to better connect the research goals and questions with the conceptual framework and literature review to the findings of this study, and is presented in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings

Current International Student Enrollment in the United States

According to a report on November 12, 2007 by Open Doors, there was an increase in the enrollment of international students in the United States of 9.97%, from the previous year, with the total number of international students numbering 582,984 for the 2006/07 school year. The largest numerical increases of students by country was from Asia, with India increasing its international student population by 9.6% (total of 83,833 students), China 8.2% (67,723 students), and The Republic of Korea 5.7% (62,392 students). Students from these three countries comprised almost 43% of all international students studying in the United States for the 2006/07 school year. Other countries demonstrating a significant percentage increase include Saudi Arabia, with a 128.7% one-year increase in students (7,886), as well as Vietnam with a 31.3% increase in students (6,036).

The countries that experienced the most significant declines in student enrollment in the United States for the 2006/2007 school year was Japan with a decrease of 8.9% (35,282 students). Kenya also experienced a decrease in the percentage of students enrolled in American colleges with a decrease of 3.2% (6,349 students), Indonesia, which experienced a 3.1% decline in students (7,338), and Hong Kong (China) with a decrease of 1.6% (7,722) (Open Doors, 2007).

The top 10 states where international students chose to study were California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. The preferred fields of study for international students were Business and Management, Engineering, Physical and Life Sciences, Social Sciences, Math and Computer Science, Fine and Applied Arts, Health Professions, Humanities, Education, and Intensive English (Open Doors, 2007).

International Student Enrollment in Louisiana

Louisiana ranked 31st in the number of international students enrolled in its colleges and universities. There were a total of 5, 619 students enrolled during the 2006/2007 school year, which represented an increase of 19.7% over the previous year. Foreign student expenditures on tuition and living expenses contributed over 106.1 million dollars to the Louisiana economy. The largest population of international students in Louisiana was similar to the national statistics, with India leading other countries with 1, 122 students. The other countries that had significant numbers of students in Louisiana's colleges and universities were China (471), Nigeria (132), Korea (120), and Canada (117) (Open Doors, 2007).

Study Participants

This section introduces each of the eleven students that agreed to participate in the study. Table 1 gives a summary of the students and their demographic information. Following table 1 is an in-depth profile of each of the student participants, including pertinent information regarding their experiences with discrimination in their pursuit of an education.

Although a majority of the students indicated that they had relatively good experiences in the United States, each student in this study confided in the interview that they believed that they were subject to unequal treatment at least once. The following student profiles focus on these experiences to illustrate how issues of inequity are perceived by international students. The students are presented in the order that they were interviewed.

Table 1*Study Participants*

Name	Age	Gender	Origin	Institution	Major	Visa
Tenado	27	Male	Japan	LPU	Jazz Studies	F-1
James	22	Male	Uzbekistan	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Julie	22	Female	South Korea	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Joe	22	Male	Vietnam	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Troy	22	Male	Uzbekistan	CCSL	ESL/Business	F-1
Margarita	37	Female	Honduras	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Danny	37	Male	Peru	CCSL	ESL	H2B/F-1
Brady	18	Female	France	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Abby	37	Female	Palestine	CCSL	ESL	F-1
Tiffany	29	Female	France	LPU	Business	F-1
Samuel	26	Male	Chad	LPU	Business	F-1

Participant One: Tenado

The first student that was recommended to me for participation in this study was a 27 year-old student from Japan. Tenado had originally come to the United States in order to study English as a Second Language (ESL). While attending Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he decided to pursue a degree in Music, which was his passion. After attempting a semester at LSU, he decided to transfer to another school in the state, which would allow him to start his music courses while enrolled in an ESL program. Tenado decided to attend the Community College of Southeast Louisiana (CCSL) because the school allowed him to take beginning music classes along with his ESL classes. He also chose CCSL because of its geographical proximity to Louisiana Public University (LPU), to which Tenado eventually transferred to because of its world-renowned Jazz Studies program.

I met Tenado during his first year as a LPU student, after his name had been given to me by the LPU director of the Office of International Students and Scholars, who served as a gatekeeper to the international student body for this study. During the interview process, Tenado

expressed that he has had a wonderful time in the United States pursuing his education, but that there were quite a few negative experiences that he felt were the result of his status as a foreigner in this country. Although he had a few difficulties with the immigration process, most of the difficulties he experienced revolved around his treatment by the general public in Southeast Louisiana. He mentioned that he was often made fun of by strangers, especially while ordering food in fast-food restaurants. He also mentioned that he was often verbally harassed while using public transportation, and that he was often made fun of when riding his bicycle around town.

Tenado has also experienced some difficulties due to his ineligibility to receive a Social Security Number. This has limited his access to housing, bank accounts, health insurance, and personal property insurance. When asked about his educational experience, he mentions the difficulties that arise when international students are required to follow specific procedures in order to pursue a degree, such as taking remedial courses that the student already has a proficiency in the area. He also mentioned that there were instances where he felt that his teachers did not treat all of the students in his classes equally. Tenado mentioned that he experienced mild verbal harassment by some of the students at both CCSL and LPU, due to his physical appearance and Japanese accent.

Tenado is currently seeking a semester's leave of absence to return to Japan in order to take care of some family issues, and mentions that he intends to continue with his studies online from Japan if the school allows him to do so. He also realizes that this will impact his current immigration status, and that he will have to reapply for a new visa once he decides to return to the United States.

Participant Two: James

James is one of two students that were referred to me by the ESL director at CCSL (gatekeeper), that are natives of Uzbekistan. Both Uzbek students are in the United States on an F1 visa with special work provisions, sponsored by different American Companies. James, 22, is currently studying ESL at CCSL, and has decided to change his status to a fulltime-student. He has decided to drop his work status, due to several instances of unfair treatment by the company that originally brought him to the United States to work.

James mentions that he believes that the company that brought him to the United States routinely engaged in unethical practices, such as exploiting the labor of international students, and placing them in unsafe working conditions. He further mentions that the international students that work for the company do not have any method of recourse if they have complaints about work issues, or personnel issues.

James also mentions that he has had a few problems with the educational system in the United States. He explains that there were several issues with his teachers, including teachers that exhibited preferential treatment towards other students in his class, especially in his ESL classes. Because of this, he prefers taking regular academic classes outside ESL, in which he feels that the teachers are more even-handed, and objective in assessing the abilities of students. James also feels that there should be financial assistance programs available to international student, due to the high cost of an American education. He believes that the policies that prohibit international students from accessing student aid should be revisited.

Most of the problems that James has encountered with discrimination have been off campus. He feels that he is often stereotyped by Americans because he doesn't look like a typical American. He feels that he is often discriminated against because Americans mistake

him as either a Mexican, or Chinese, and that people often treat him poorly because of his physical features.

Participant Three: Julie

Julie is a 22 year-old student from Seoul, South Korea, who was referred to me by the ESL director at CCSL. She is currently a second semester student studying ESL at CCSL, and is working as an undocumented laborer at a local hotel in order to be able to afford her education in the United States.

Julie did not have any problems with the immigration process, which she mentions went very smoothly. Her educational experience was not as positive. Julie mentions that she has had numerous issues with her teachers, especially in the ESL area. She complains that her teachers do not treat her fairly. She believes that the ESL teachers treat the Hispanic students better than the other students in the class. Julie also complains that she feels as if she needs to learn how to speak Spanish just to study in the United States, since many of the ESL teachers are Hispanic, and speak Spanish to the Hispanic students during class. She mentions that she is occasionally late to her classes, due to her work schedule and lack of transportation, and that her teachers often suggest that she drop her class, even though she is doing well, and has mastered the course content.

Not only has Julie experienced negative treatment by certain faculty members, she also mentions that the professional staff at CCSL do not always treat her with respect, and often choose not to help her. She feels that this is due to her accent, and her lack of vocabulary, especially technical terms. She also believes that CCSL has a lack of official support systems for international students, and that the needs of international students are not being met, despite having to pay almost double the tuition of domestic students.

Julie has also had a few unpleasant experiences outside of the campus. Although her experience with Americans has been generally positive, there have been several instances where she felt that Americans have intentionally tried to embarrass her by laughing or making fun of her accent and the way that she talks. She has also had difficulty in finding housing and affordable health insurance, and feels that international students are faced with many obstacles to success, and that there is a limit to the amount of success that an international student can achieve.

Participant Four: Joe

The fourth student that I interviewed for this study was a young man from Vietnam. Joe is a 22 year-old student in his second semester of study at CCSL. He is currently studying ESL, and lives with his uncle in a part of town that has a large Vietnamese community.

Although Joe did not have any problems with the immigration process, he mentions that many of his Vietnamese friends did not have such luck. He mentions that the difficulty for many Vietnamese students in obtaining visas is due to their lack of proficiency in speaking English, as well as the lack of personal funds to support themselves while in the United States (even though the student may have immediate relatives in the US that have offered to support the student).

Joe has had some major issues with discrimination as he has pursued his education at CCSL. He mentions that even though his teachers have been excellent, the students at CCSL are constantly harassing him about the way that he speaks and looks. Joe often tries to participate in organized sports through the school's intramural sports program. He often finds that the American students, particularly the African-American students will make fun of him while playing basketball. He explains that students will comment on his short physical height, and imitate his language by saying nonsensical words, followed by laughter. He also mentions that

some of the students will also make finger gestures at him. Joe also feels that American students will often avoid talking to him, and that when he approaches an American student, that they often find an excuse to walk away.

Joe has expressed a similar sentiment when discussing his experience with the professional staff at CCSL. When attempting to pay his tuition online, his account was charged twice for a single transaction. When attempting to rectify this issue, the personnel in the bursar's office refused to help him, and mentioned that it was his mistake, and that there was nothing they could do to help him. Joe also mentions that all other forms of recourse have been unsuccessful, and that he eventually had to pay the entire amount.

Joe has also experienced unfair and unequal treatment off campus. He mentions that he often feels isolated when off campus, due to his language proficiency. He says that many times, he will ask for directions or advice on where to go for specific purchases. Joe feels that a majority of Americans will ignore him, or pretend that they can't understand him, and walk away. He also mentions that when he goes to a restaurant or store, he often has issues with the cashiers, who are often impatient because of the time it takes for him to communicate with them. When playing basketball in the public recreation center, Joe often has experiences similar to the ones expressed above while playing basketball at school. Americans will often laugh at his height, as well as make fun of his accent. Many will refuse to let him play with them.

Joe has also found it difficult to accomplish several important things due to the lack of a Social Security Number (SSN). He mentions that he is only authorized to work on campus, and that there are rarely jobs available for him at school. He also mentions that he has had a difficult time trying to open a bank account and an account at T-Mobile for a cellular telephone due to the lack of a SSN, as well as the inability to rent an apartment.

Participant Five: Troy

Troy was the second of the two students I interviewed from Uzbekistan. Like the student James, Troy, also 22, holds an F1 visa with special provisions for work in the United States, sponsored by different American Companies. He is currently in his second semester at CCSL studying ESL and Business. Due to his sponsorship by an American company, Troy had no difficulty in obtaining his visa, nor did he experience any difficulties with the immigration process. Where Troy has had negative experiences has been through the association with the parent company that brought him to the United States for work.

Troy mentions that he had originally requested that the parent company assign him to a job in Florida. Due to some unknown circumstances, he ended up working for a McDonalds restaurant in Moss Point, Mississippi, within a few months after the landfall of Hurricane Katrina. He complains that the working conditions at this restaurant were far from ideal. He mentions that since he was an exchange student worker, his supervisors required him to work much more than the American workers, usually with three times the normal workload.

After quitting his job, he arrived in Southeastern Louisiana, and decided to study at CCSL. Troy mentions that most of his educational experience has been very pleasant, and feels that his teachers have prepared him very well to advance academically. He also mentions that he has many American friends, but not many friends that are students. He feels that the domestic students at CCSL are not very open to new experiences, especially meeting new people, or people that are different from themselves. However, Troy feels that the international student population at CCSL has been very warm and friendly, and consider all international students as one big family.

The main issues of unequal treatment that Troy has experienced revolve around the policies and regulations that CCSL imposes on international students. His major problem revolves around the policy that mandates that all international students must take a beginning college algebra course, regardless if they are proficient at math or not. Although he had studied advanced calculus as a high school student in Uzbekistan, and passed CCSL's placement test, he was not allowed to substitute another course for the beginning algebra course, nor was he allowed to take a higher-level math course to accommodate his business degree. He feels that he is being forced to pay tuition for a course that is not beneficial to his growth as a student, since he has had much higher-level courses in his home country.

The other issue that Troy brings up is the lack of financial aid that is available to international students. He feels that since international students are paying over twice the amount on tuition that domestic students pay, along with many special fees for international students, there should be some sort of mechanism for students to access some sort of financial aid.

Participant Six: Margarita

Margarita is a 37 year-old woman from Honduras. She is currently finishing her fourth semester in the ESL program at CCSL, and will be transitioning into regular academic courses once she is through with the ESL Program. Margarita did not have any problems with the immigration process, but has had several issues while trying to complete the ESL program at CCSL.

Like many of the other international students, Margarita has been denied financial aid, due to her status as an international student. Although she was told by CCSL officials that she could apply for a scholarship, and that her GPA was sufficient to qualify, no one mentioned to

her that her status as an international student would disqualify her from contention. Aggravating this situation was the lack of willingness from the CCSL staff to address Margarita's issue.

When she went to inquire as to the reasons that she was unable to receive a scholarship, she was consistently ignored, or told that no one could help her.

Margarita also mentions that she feels that many of the staff at CCSL routinely employ favoritism when deciding how to approach specific students. She opines that a student's accent, look, or dress will often determine the treatment that you will receive. She feels that many of the workers feel bothered by international student's questions, and that some school officials act as if international students are intruding upon their country. She mentions several instances where workers in either the registrar's office or bursar's office would ask her to return later because they could not understand her accent, and that the persons on staff that spoke Spanish were not on duty at the time.

Margarita describes her relationship with CCSL students as cordial, and friendly. However, one observation that Margarita makes about students at CCSL is that each particular ethnic group will stick together, and exclude other ethnic groups. She finds this particularly prevalent with domestic students. She mentions that Americans will not talk with international students, unless they need to know some information to pass a test, or otherwise need help. When asking American students for help, Margarita does not receive reciprocal treatment. Most American students will not come forward to offer help, even when it is obvious that a person is in need.

Even though Margarita has not experienced many instances of discrimination off campus, she states that she sees a lot of prejudice and discrimination towards Hispanics on a daily basis. She mentions that Americans will often stare at Hispanics and turn away quickly once the

Hispanic acknowledges his or her presence. She feels that they are making snap judgments about the person without getting to know them. She also believes that foreigners are not treated equally with Americans in stores. She states that immigrants often feels invisible, or that they don't have the right to insist on assistance, and that it is often better to stay quiet, rather than inconveniencing others.

Participant Seven: Danny

Danny is a 37 year-old student from Peru. He originally came to the United States in 2006 on an H2B visa to help with the recovery of the Gulf Coast region after Hurricane Katrina. In the last year, he decided to switch his visa to an F1 student visa because he wanted to pursue English, and wishes to become an advocate for immigrant's rights.

Danny's experience with US federal regulations was mixed. When he first applied under his H2B visa, he did not experience many problems. However, when he attempted to apply for his F1 visa, he mentions that it was a much more difficult process. He believes that the interviewing process was extremely subjective, and that immigration officials did not interview each person with the same amount of scrutiny. Danny mentions that some interviews were completed in less than five minutes, and some took over an hour. He also mentions that the amount of money a person has is key to being able to obtain a visa, and that only a handful of student seeking to study in the US are allowed in. Danny also states that there is no recourse for appealing a visa denial, and those that are denied are required to repeat the process in its entirety.

As a worker in the Gulf Coast area after Hurricane Katrina, Danny mentions that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials often visited them on the job sites, attempting to discover illegal aliens. He mentions that although there were many undocumented Europeans, Africans, and persons from the islands (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti), they were

never questioned about their immigration status. He feels that the ICE officers only targeted the “browns” or Hispanics due to the influx of Hispanic laborers to the Gulf Coast region. Since the Europeans were White, and the Africans and Islanders were Black, Danny feels that the ICE officials assumed that they were Americans.

When describing his educational experience, Danny feels that most of his teachers have been extremely supportive, but that the staff and other workers at CCSL were not. He mentions an experience with an officer in the school’s testing center. When attempting to take his placement tests, the officer kept complaining that she could not understand his English. She would not allow him to take the tests, mentioning that because she could not understand him, he would have to wait until a Spanish-speaking worker could translate for him. Danny also had a similar experience when trying to pay his tuition one semester.

According to Danny, the students at CCSL have been generally nice. Even though some have made fun of his accent, or the way that he dresses, he feels that it is due to ignorance. He also feels that the students are just kids, and do not mean any harm.

Where Danny has experienced the most discrimination has been while off campus in the community. A major incident occurred when he tried to check out a few books at the public library. The front desk worker asked for his ID, to which he produced his passport. The worker then stated that he could not check out the books because the passport did not constitute an ID. When he challenged her, mentioning that a passport is a legal ID, the worker pulled out a pistol and pointed it at him and mentioned that he needed to leave. When Danny reported this to library officials, they mentioned that they could not get proper workers since the Hurricane, and that there was nothing they could do. He feels that there was no recourse for such an act of aggression on the workers part, and that his life was endangered.

Danny mentions that Hispanics are always being racially profiled by the police officers in the Gulf Coast area. Two days before our interview, he was stopped while driving to school by a police officer, asking for his paperwork. He complied, mentioning that he was a student, and that he was on his way to CCSL to take a test that was to begin in 30 minutes. The officer made him wait for over an hour, and returned his documents saying that everything was in order.

In general, Danny feels that the persons in the Southeast US are much more racist and intolerant of immigrants than persons in the Northern US, and that they often feel as if the immigrants that came to help rebuild the Gulf Coast are actually here to take jobs away from Americans. He also feels that whenever discrimination or injustice occurs that there is no recourse to address the instances

Participant Eight: Brady

Unlike a majority of international students that I interviewed for this study, Brady had relatively few instances where she felt that she had been treated unequally. Brady is an 18 year-old student from France. She originally came to the US as part of an exchange program between her university in France and several colleges in the Gulf Coast Region. She had previously come to Southeast Louisiana a year ago, to make a documentary film of the affect of Hurricane Katrina on the area's musicians for a final project for one of her classes. Because she had such a positive experience during her first trip to Louisiana, she chose CCSL to fulfill the exchange portion of her college degree in France.

Brady mentions that she had no problems when immigrating to the United States the two times she has applied for her visa. She also mentions that she has been able to fit in quite well since she has an excellent command of the English Language, and also dresses and looks like an American. She has also had a very easy time negotiating life outside of the college environment,

mentioning that she had become close with the musical and arts community in Southeast Louisiana.

Brady's negative experiences were primarily due to encounters with the faculty and staff at CCSL. When she first arrived, she had asked the international student advisor for advice on testing out of her ESL classes, since she has spoken English for most of her life. Brady asked the advisor what she would need to do to test out of ESL, and what her options would be after she completed the placement tests. The international student advisor avoided answering her questions, and seemed to not know what the regulations were concerning international students that tested out of ESL courses. Brady further mentions that although the international student advisor was nice, she wasn't able to help with anything. She even had problems with the advisor when she tried to find out how long she could stay in the US before returning to France after she had finished her classes. Brady feels that the school has placed someone in a crucial position, without the requisite knowledge to do her job. She further feels that there is no recourse for her to address this issue.

The other instance that Brady describes involves a jazz history teacher who always singles her out when talking about French musicians, assuming that she would know about the musicians, since she is from the same country. She feels that every time the instructor calls upon her to speak in class, she is expected to speak as a representative for the entire French people, which she feels very uncomfortable doing. Brady also feels that the American students in her class always think that since she is a new student, and from another country, that she will automatically know nothing about the music or culture of the musicians. She, in fact, mentions that she has studied jazz and the musicians from the Gulf Coast, and knows the music quite well.

Brady also mentions that international students should be granted the right to work off campus. In France, American students are allowed to work as well as attend school. She feels that it is unfair that there are no reciprocal agreements between the US and French governments. She also doesn't understand why the US government is so reluctant to allow students the opportunity to work and support themselves while attending school in the United States.

Participant Nine: Abby

Abby is a 37 year-old student from Palestine. She is in her fourth semester studying ESL and Business at CCSL. She has been in the United States since 2000, when she accompanied her husband who was in the United States on a student. Since 2005, she has been divorced, and had to apply for her own student visa here in the United States. Like several of the students interviewed for this study, she feels that her experience with the immigration process was not objective, and that the persons that interviewed her did not treat her equally with others. Unlike several of the other students interviewed, she feels that the treatment she received was caused directly by her dress, physical appearance, and her religion.

When we discussed her experience with the immigration, she mentioned that the process took an extraordinary amount of time, and that she feels that her choice to wear the Hijab, or traditional Muslim headscarf, was a determining factor. Abby mentions that because she wears the scarf for religious reasons, most of the staff at the immigration office immediately singled her out for different treatment. She explains that immigration officers would look at her funny as if she were stupid, or weird, and would often make her wait for a long time while being interviewed.

I asked Abby if she always wore the Hijab since coming to the United States. She answered that she chose not to wear it when she arrived in the US, because she wanted to

experience what it felt like not to wear the Hijab, since she was subject to wearing it daily in Palestine. She mentions that the treatment she received was strikingly different. She states that although people might stare at her a bit, they were not afraid of her, and would approach her to engage in conversation. After her divorce, Abby decided to reaffirm her faith, and continue the use of the Hijab. She noticed an immediate change in the way that people would treat her.

Abby describes her educational experience as fairly good, even though there have been a few instances where she feels that she was discriminated against. A majority of the teachers that she has had have been very supportive in helping her complete her degree. She feels, however, that there are a few who are not supportive, and did not treat her equally with other students. She mentions one in particular, who seemed to favor the other students in the class, spending more time explaining concepts, and answering their questions. This teacher would routinely ignore Abby when she would attempt to ask a question. She feels that since she is a Muslim, her religion makes the teacher see her differently. She observes that in her ESL class, the Vietnamese and Spanish students are always talking with each other, and laughing with each other, and although she shares in their discussions and jokes, the teacher still seems to treat the other students better. Abby tells me that there were only a few teachers that exhibited this type of behavior. When I asked her if this was one of the teachers in her business or computer classes, she said that her teachers in business and computers classes were good, and that the teacher she had an issue with was one of her ESL teachers.

When I asked Abby about her relationship with the student population at CCSL, she describes her relationships as wonderful. She feels that all of the students in the ESL classes treat each other with respect, and support each other as if they are in an extended family from many

different countries. Abby mentions that she does not associate with many students in her business or computer classes.

Abby has also had a few incidences with the staff at CCSL, which left her feeling as if she had not been treated well. She mentions that because she wears her Hijab, that the workers are always judging her. She feels as if some of the staff do not like her and do not want to associate with her, giving her a hard time when she tries to conduct school business. She feels that the workers think it is silly for her to wear the “scarf.” This upsets her greatly. She wishes that she could speak English more proficiently, so that she could express to them that she is a normal person and that she only wants to further her education.

When discussing her experience off campus, Abby opines that this is the hardest of all the environments we discussed in the interview to be an international student. She feels that Americans are too quick to judge others based upon their looks, or religious practices, and that there is a lot of prejudice in American society. Abby mentions that Muslims often receive poor treatment from Americans including verbal taunts of “You are wearing a rug on your head,” or other forms of harassment. Abby also mentions that she is often mistreated by waiters when she goes to restaurants, or otherwise interacting with the American public.

Participant Ten: Tiffany

Tiffany is a 29 year-old student from France studying international business at LPU. She has been in the United States for four years, and is graduating from the business school at LPU this semester. Tiffany is currently planning to return to France after her graduation because of several negative experiences while trying to complete her degree.

Tiffany mentions that her experience with immigration was terrible. She feels that the immigration officers treated her differently than any of the other French nationals that applied at

for a student visa during the same time period. Although Tiffany is French, she was originally born in the Philippines, and adopted by a French Couple when she was an infant. Almost every time she has had to conduct official business regarding her immigration status, the officers will always detain and question her about her family background, even though her credentials are in order.

Although Tiffany mentions that she enjoyed her educational experience, she feels that being a foreigner has made it more difficult for her to complete her degree. She also feels that the students at LPU did not treat her the same as a domestic student. Being the only foreign student in a class was an isolating experience for her. She mentions that nobody wanted to help her when she experienced any questions or problems, nor would the students speak to her. Tiffany also believes that most American students feel as if foreign students are taking resources that are dedicated to domestic students, and often tell her that foreigners are taking their jobs away.

Tiffany also had several negative experiences with her teachers in the business program. Several of her professors commented that since international students were studying in the United States, it was the student's responsibility to learn English well enough to take the courses, and that it would be unfair to American students if the teacher repeated him or herself or slowed down to accommodate the student while trying to take notes. This caused her to drop several of her classes.

Tiffany describes her experience with the LPU staff as slightly negative. She mentions that the office workers are often mean to her, asking her to "Speak English please," or " You are in New Orleans, so you have to get used to New Orleans," even though she can speak intelligible English. She also mentions that she wishes that the LPU Office of International Students could

do a better job alerting students to the difficulties that lie ahead of them when they first enter school.

Like many of the other students interviewed for this study, Tiffany has expressed that she felt the most instances of discrimination off campus. She mentions that not being able to secure a Social Security number has been a major hurdle for her. It was very difficult for her to open a bank account, as well as obtain her driver's license. She also mentions that Americans seem to be prejudiced in general. She had a very difficult time trying to find an apartment off campus, and mentions that she feels Americans are scared to rent to her because she is a foreigner. She also mentions that she is having a very difficult time trying to find a job. Since she has been granted permission to stay in the US for an additional year of Optional Practical Training, she had been searching, and had the support of her business faculty as references; she has not yet secured a single interview.

Participant Eleven: Samuel

The last student interviewed for this study was 26 year-old Samuel from Chad. Samuel is studying at LPU towards a degree in Business and Finance. He decided to come to the United States in 2005, after a semester at one of the largest universities in Central Africa in Cameroon. Because Samuel already had his mother, sister, brother, and several cousins in the Gulf Coast area, he decided to move to Louisiana.

Samuel describes his experience with the immigration process as difficult. Because of family ties to the military in Congo and Chad, Samuel had a difficult time in persuading immigration officials to let him immigrate to the US. He also believes that his status as a Muslim made the process more difficult. He also believes that his work with the International Red Cross as a translator in the war in Darfur has also complicated the immigration process.

Samuel believes that his educational experience has been good, and that most of the teachers and staff has been extremely supportive. He mentions that it is easy for him to make friends, and that most of the LPU students treat him with respect. An interesting observation that Samuel makes is that he believes some of the international students seem to discriminate against others even more than American students do. As an example, he mentions that he had asked to borrow some books from one of his friends, because he did not have the money to buy the books at the moment. Instead of allowing him to borrow the books, the friend mentioned that he did not have them. However, he witnessed the same student selling the books back to the bookstore that afternoon.

One of the only negative experiences that Samuel has experienced on LPU's campus was with his roommate, who did not respect Samuel's Muslim customs. While studying at the library, Samuel's roommate decided to order several pornographic movies on Samuel's cable TV account, which upset him when he discovered the charge. He feels that his roommate did not respect his religious beliefs, even though they had discussed preferences and habits before becoming roommates. This was surprising to Samuel, especially since the roommate had previously been very accommodating to him.

Samuel believes that his experiences off campus have not been negative, except for not being able to speak English as proficiently as an American. He mentions that because he can also speak French and Arabic, sometimes the grammar becomes mixed, and people do not understand what he is trying to say. He mentions that this has been a problem when trying to conduct official business off campus, such as applying for a bank account. He also mentions that the inability for him to obtain a Social Security card has also made official processes more difficult. Samuel mentions that besides his proficiency with English, the only other factor that

might differentiate him from American students is his dress. He mentions that he will often wear traditional African garb, and that he enjoys wearing “nice clothes,” instead of blue jeans and a T-shirt.

Emerging Themes

After transcribing the student interviews verbatim, I conducted seven separate rounds of data coding, in which several distinct themes began to emerge from the transcripts. From within the transcripts of the interviews, there were three major areas of significance in which the students perceived discrimination and problems with inequity. These three areas are: the students’ experience with federal regulations, the students’ experience with the immediate educational environment, and the student’s experience with the off-campus environment.

Along with the three major areas of significance that emerged, there were also significant themes that pertained to the three main areas. The major themes that emerged from the area of federal regulations were: the immigration process, lack of services for international students, and the lack of recourse for international students that have experienced problems with the system. Within the area of the students’ educational experience, the major themes that emerged were the negative relationships between international students and faculty, negative or unprofessional treatment by school staff, negative treatment by domestic students, and the lack of system-level resources such as financial aid and other support structures. The major themes that emerged from the students’ experiences off campus were prejudice (specifically being stereotyped), and actual negative treatment due to being a foreigner.

The following sections explore the emerging themes from the viewpoint of the students involved in this study. Because this is a qualitative study, I have chosen to use the students’ own words to tell their stories. Following the qualitative tradition, I am using direct quotations

verbatim from the interview transcripts to better illuminate their experiences with discrimination. In certain cases where language or communication issues were present, I have provided my interpretation of the student's quote, and an explanation of the reasons for my interpretation.

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Immigration

Although many international students who choose to study in the United States never encounter issues with the complex web of federal regulations, those that have experienced problems often cite that the immigration process, specifically the individual student interviews, leave too much room for personal subjectivity by immigration officers, who are often subject to personal biases. In this study, the students that experienced difficulties with the immigration process mentioned that it was their belief that the unfairness of the interview process, and the personal biases of the immigration officers were a contributing factor to the difficulties that they experienced. In several cases, the students interviewed for this study mentioned that they believe that their religion, country of origin, or personal beliefs also contributed to delays in obtaining their student visas:

Abby: Ah, it is longer, you know, it was a long process. It took I ah, more than a year to get my paper done. And because maybe that's I think before I wear the... my scarf, because I now wear the scarf, everybody was ah... treat me good. You know, and respect me. And now, after I wear my Hijab, nobody, oh, the relationship between me and them is different.

Interviewer: ...that maybe the, the officials treated you...

Abby: Yeah. Because you know when I go to register or do other thing, they look me...they give me the weird look, and it was like I am stupid, or I do not understand what thing.

Abby: And they were... was mean to me you know? To finish my paper... they do not want to help me... that much, you know?

Another student that experienced a delay and perceived that his country of origin and his religion were contributing factors was Samuel. Due to family ties with the military in Chad, activism with the International Red Cross, and being a devout Muslim, Samuel feels that his application was delayed:

Samuel: With immigration, I had great problem. Big problem. Because I went to the embassy three times to get you know like my visa. Because you know, when I was in Chad, my grand, you know my grandfather, he helped many you know, like many president in Chad, to the presidency, our president. And like many the Republic from Central Africa, and sometimes the government friends send him to Congo, you know, because there is a war between the rebels and other stuff. And he is like the boss of the like military. So, because of him, and my uncle, I went to the embassy, so it was not easy.

Interviewer: I see. Did they uh... you said that it took three times?

Samuel: Three times it took to...

Interviewer: Did you feel that the uh... did you feel that you were treated differently than any other person?

Samuel: Yeah I think so. They treat me a lot different.

After asking if he felt that there were other circumstances that might have caused the delay in processing his visa, Samuel mentions that being Muslim probably hindered the process:

You know, I am not from south, and I am from uh... north.

Because the north of my country, it's more like uh, people practice you know, like uh... Islamic. And in the South, Christian, and sometimes Catholic religion. So, I went there, they saw like my name Madjou [a common Muslim family name], so they favor not a lot of Muslim to get you know, like visa than like sud... like people from south. So it was not easy...

Like the two students above, Tiffany had a difficult time when trying to immigrate to the United States. She describes her experience with the embassy officials in Paris, and how her ethnic background and family issues raised suspicions about her motives for immigrating to the United States:

My experience with the visa is in Paris, because I had to go through the embassy. Uh, I had to go to the embassy. Usually it takes like one day, like one morning to, to get everything done. But for me I had to go back two days in a row. For all morning it took me like five hours. I stayed five hours in their office, and like they were asking me all these kinds of questions like: Why I want to work... like I want to study in the United States? Why my, my uh, my dad was born there, he was born in Algeria, even if he is French? And why my brother was working in... And they were

calling all like all of my family member to check if I was uh...
why I was born in the Philippines, like, and, and why uh...
everything about my story. And I thought like it was very...
personal. And like they were not... Why they will ask me all these
type of questions, and some of the students next to me they were
asking also a visa to, to study in, in the United States, they were
not asking to them the same question as me. And I thought it was
kind of a... too much.

After being granted a visa to study in the United States, Tiffany was held and interrogated by US Customs Officers at length, and was asked the same type of questions when she exited her flight in the US:

Tiffany: I wasn't born in France, so I don't look French. Because I
have been adopted, so... And first of all, they were asking me at
the immigration why I uh... Why I don't look French. And I say,
“you know it's my story, like I have all of my paperwork, and I've
been... I explain my situation why like I don't look French, and
I've been adopted, and stuff... And they say, “Yeah, but your
country, we don't know your country, we don't know like the city
that you were born...” And, I've been asking like so many hours I
stayed... One time I stayed like over seven hours like answering
question. And they were treating me like if I was a [laughs]
terrorist, or something.

Interviewer: Was this in... ah, was this in maybe customs in the United States, or was this in an embassy somewhere or...

Tiffany: No, no it was in the custom like I first flew in the United States. Like they were taking me from one customs office to another one. And they were treating me like... Do like... Took all my, all my uh, luggage, and check everything like... It was a big mess in the room. And like they all, even my body and stuff. And I was like "Wow. What's wrong?" And they threaten me to go back to my country. And, uh, on the first plane. And I say "No! I'm a student, I am not you know, I am not a terrorist. I'm, I'm..." And they were treating me like if I was... And I stay like all the time when I come to the United States I have to pass by the immigration stuff. It's a big mess, all the time.

When I asked Tiffany if all of her paperwork was in order, and if she had been given clearance for her trip to the United States, she mentions:

Yeah, everything is proper. But it was the same thing. Because I started my studies like a few years ago in the United States in another school, and it was in the same thing in the other school in Louisiana. I don't know why. I don't know why, uh... I don't understand why but like since I came back to Louisiana, it's been very difficult for me.

Although Tiffany's account seemed to ramble a bit from issue to issue, it is clear to me that she believed that much of the difficulty she had in the immigration process was due to her

ethnicity. She also seemed to believe that immigration officials used this in trying to determine whether or not to allow her to enter the US for study.

A few of the other students also mentioned that they felt that the immigration process was not a subjective or fair process. They also believed that a student's success in eventually obtaining a visa had nothing to do with scholastic achievement, or educational reasons. As Danny points out, he believes that personal finances are a determining factor:

Danny:...so it, it is like eh... 10 percent or less, than, than this.

Than, than this get the visa. And the process is very ... a, a lot of people want to come here in the United States. There is a long lines, long line... The interview with the consulate is only five, no four or five minutes, no, no more. They ask a few uh few questions. But it only related to what you have. You have money, you have properties, you have a car... So if you have nothing, you are out. It's uh... simple... And you uh... and, and, uh, it's very... The only people that come here are the people that have... middle class. No, no poor, no?

Some of the interviewed students mentioned that having family in the United States might actually work against the chances of a student being granted a visa. Joe believes that many Vietnamese students are often denied a visa because of family already living in the United States. He believes that the reasons for the visa denials are a fear that students will drop out of school immediately, and seek work illegally:

Joe: Um... In my case, I had no problem my visa, my passport or anything else. But others, Vietnamese student in Vietnam,

Vietnam, they have big trouble with the visa. Cause, um... the US government, they do not want Vietnamese student come over here and stay here. That's why they limited the student to come over here by the interview visa, the visa interview. After, uh, before they come here.

Interviewer: What are common problems?

Joe: Common problems? For example: if a student in Vietnam they have um, you know, they have um, relative over here, they cannot go to the US to study, cause the US government might think they come over here and live with their relative and stay here. And they, the... the student won't come back to Vietnam.

But just stay here. And that is why the US government limited the student to come over here...

Although I had a difficult time understanding Joe's English, he was quite persuasive in his belief that it was harder for relatives of US citizens to immigrate to this country for an education. He mentioned several times that he believed that Vietnamese students routinely had difficulties obtaining student visas because the US government was concerned that the students were only using the visa process to enter the US for work.

Even though the process for obtaining student visas seems to be where students believe they experience the most unequal treatment by immigration officials, Danny mentions a case where Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials seemed to use racial profiling and stereotyping techniques while investigating undocumented workers attempting to help rebuild the Gulf Coast area after Hurricane Katrina. Danny describes how he was singled out by ICE

officials for scrutiny, although there were many other workers at the same location that were not in the United States legally:

And I came here to help when I was ah working. I, I here to help to rebuild the city, no? I don't know, I, I think it's unfair. And, and I uh... other thing, I working in the valet parking in hotel here. And there, there are Russ...Russian people. There are Palestine people. There are Dominican people that work with me. And, and when the... the immigra, the ICE came, immigra, came to, to see them... we are legal, no? But they don't say nothing to them. It is uh... one thing that I am very... angry about this. Because they say nothing to them because they are... they look... They are white. They don't say nothing to them because they are white. They are Russian. You would speak with them, you would understand nothing. Or you understand a little bit? But, they're white. Yeah, and the Dominicans are, are black. They don't say nothing to Dominicans. They speak Spanish.

Interviewer: because of the way that you look, they single you out for that treatment?

Danny: Yes. Very bad for this, uh, uh, say why only the browns?

Although Danny tends to ramble in his descriptions, he is persuasive in his argument that immigration officials seemed to target workers with physical traits that were characteristic of foreign workers, while routinely ignoring those that had physical traits similar to Americans, without attempting to ascertain their citizenship via official documents.

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Lack Of Resources/Services

Several of the students interviewed for this study indicated that they felt that there were many resources and services that American students enjoy that are not available to international students. One of the most common complaints by international students was the misconception that they were not allowed to apply for a Social Security Number, due to the strict regulations on foreign students being allowed to work in the United States. Because the SSN has been traditionally accepted as an "official" form of identification, many businesses still require all persons seeking their services to have a SSN. This has led to many complications and denials of service towards international students, which have complicated their lives.

Joe: Ok. An example, an international student, they don't have Social Security Number. And I try. I try many times. I try... The only way we can get the uh, SSN, um, is we work on campus. Some student, they don't have um, they don't have chance to work on this campus, so they just don't have the social security number. But if you go everywhere, you go to the bank, you go to um... you, you want to um... um... open an account at the T-mobile or something, they, they all like um... you know, require a social security number. So, international students can't do nothing... Very difficult. And also you want to... Ok, for example you want to rent an apartment, cause you international, some of, some of us don't have a house, or some place to live. We have to rent an apartment; we don't have social security number. So what can we do? You know?

Several other students describe similar experiences:

Samuel: It was difficult. Yeah, first it was difficult for me.

Because when I got here, I did not have you know like Social Security, to you know, like open bank account on campus.

Interviewer: Ah, so the, the banks here on campus require you to have a...

Samuel: Social Security...

Interviewer: Hmmm...

Samuel: I did not have that. So when I was in my country, I call on like my mom, or call on my uncle, want to transfer me some money to pay my tuition here. And my mom went there, and ask them about is “how to open you know like open a new account for sombod... for my son because he is acting on this here...” They told us that, “It is not possible. If you don’t have that, it is not possible.”

Tiffany: It was very hard to open a bank account a year ago. It took me like four or five days to go back. Not all day, but I had to go back to the bank for four or five days. And because first I didn’t have a Social Security Number, and th... then like trying... and even like had a family member going, coming with me from France to help me, and like, we had a hard time to open a bank account. To go through every paperwork, it was hard. Even, uh...

even like uh... open uh phone line and Internet service in stuff, which was really, really hard. Everything was uh, like it's very tough. Being international, I guess... Even driver's license... [Laughs], every thing is tough... Renting apartments, renting even a car, or whatever.

Tenado: Oh yeah. That was like, that was like really ridiculous system. Like, to get, I don't know how important getting a social security number is, at that time, you need a social security number to get work. Ok. Well how can I get SSN? Well you have to get work in school first, so you can get a SSN. You Know.

Interviewer: So you are talking about school work-study programs?

Tenado: Yes. School work-study programs. Right. But generally, outside of school, we are not able, to you know, to apply legally, unless I get ????? that kind of stuff. So that was a really hard time. But that makes sense, because we are here for student, um....um.... that's a really hard time.

Although Brady was not hindered by the lack of a Social Security number, she disagrees with the policy that prohibits international students from working in the United States. She feels that there should be reciprocal treatment for students from countries that allow American students the right to work. She also feels that without such reciprocal agreements, inequity towards foreign students will be unavoidable:

... the most important area where it's really not fair to me is that actually international students can't work. Um, I really don't understand that because American students can work in France. So why can't French students work in the United States. And uh, I mean my parents can uh provide support for me, but I don't want to ask them to provide support for me forever, you know? I would like to be more independent, so... Um, that's to me the most unfair thing.

Another issue that seems to be significant to the students in this study was the lack of access to health insurance, or medical treatment for students that become ill while in the United States. This seems to be a critical problem for those students who also have work permission, since most of the employers of international students do not provide any sort of health care:

Danny: But I have a lot of experience, not only my own experience, but I see a lot of different experience in work, in there, the people that are hurting in, in the work. They sent back to their countries hurt. Uh, it's not fair I think. Because, you come, you are hurting here, you have no insurance that cover you. And they don't want to pay this and they send back their country... it's insane, things that you would never believe.

Other students mention:

Tenado: Well, yeah, I feel much more like I have to pay because I have no insurance, you know?

Interviewer: Mmmmm.

Tenado: Like insurance for when....Um...

Interviewer: Like when you get sick?

Tenado: Yeah. That kind of thing, mmm...mmm... How should I say... Yeah, something like that.

Julie: Well, housing is good. We had a little problem finding housing in New Orleans, and I don't know that insurance, insurance? Insurance is so high it is so difficult.

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Lack Of Recourse

Even though many of the participants interviewed for this study mentioned that the issues pertaining to the lack of work permission or access to other resources available to domestic students presented a problem, perhaps more troubling and demoralizing to the students is the lack of official recourse that is available to them when an instance of discrimination occurs.

In one of the more striking instances, Danny mentions an encounter with a security guard in a public library who refused to allow him and several other international students entry because they did not have a state driver's license. Although the students presented their passports, the security guard refused to allow them to enter. When Danny challenged her on the validity of the passport, the security guard pointed her gun at the students and ordered them out of the library. When he approached both his employer and the public library staff to file a complaint, they mentioned that there was nothing that could be done about the situation:

Danny:...she said: "Sorry. Sorry for this kind of people. Because they are ignorant. They are ignorant because they do not know that a passport is an ID. And you, and uh come legal here, and you

come here... Sorry.” But, she didn’t tell me, you know, “You have to go... you have to go.” Uh... and I never come into, uh in the library. It is the first thing that happen here and it... And then I explain there, that we go to... to the office of the... employer that I have? And I uh... I make my complaint there... they call the library, and the library said eh... “Sorry, because we hire... uh, in this moment, we don’t have a, a lot of people to choose. We hire, are the people that don’t have the???? education to know that the passport is a ID, no?”

In another work-related incident, James describes the lack of response to his reporting of unfair working conditions at the McDonalds that he was contracted to work for as part of his school/work visa, as well as the treatment by the hiring company that initially brought student workers into the United States. He mentions that the parent company constantly takes advantage of international students’ lack of English proficiency to get away with treating the international students poorly:

So, if they bring...usually they bring thousands of exchange students, so they thinks only to making money, not about students exchange program. So mostly you will be discriminated, you will be treated unfairly, at these places.

Interviewer: Uh... By the actual company that switched the exchange for...

James: Yes. It is not fault of coworkers at McDonalds, because they are sick people. They are prisoners or people. They are not

???? our safety, they are mostly student that came here, they don't want to continue here with visa to stay in this country to go here... But with others they don't speak English as well, they try to do whatever they want to...you know?

Interviewer: Right. Just to use the fact that they can't speak English to do...

James: Yeah. Because they cannot explain something to write, or they don't have a, cannot ask for they treating well, so they do whatever they want.

In a similar situation, Julie mentions she feels that many of the businesses that hire international students treat them with less regard than American students, because the international students need to work in order to help pay for their education and will not challenge any unequal treatment:

Julie: Well, they think that they, they have kind of a, not really a contract, but kind of contract. But they think that anyway she wants to stay in the US, so even though we treat them in a bad way, and she still want to stay here, they don't care, because they know we will not quit the job, so its like they...

Interviewer: So this is at your work?

Julie: Yes

In a different situation, Tiffany describes her inability to have “red-flags” removed from her immigration file, that single her out for enhanced scrutiny at immigration checkpoints. Although she has officially consulted US immigration officials to have the flags removed, and

the United States Immigration department has declared that her “red-flags” have been removed, she continues to experience difficulty for the same reasons every time she encounters an immigration checkpoint:

Tiffany: No, because like I don’t know... I, I had flags on my... on my paperwork uh, coming to the United States. They put me... they put some flags on my records. And the international office still doesn’t understand why I have these flags. And we’re trying, they said like when, when they contacted the immigration, they said like my flags were removed, but all the time when I come to the United States, and I have to pass through the immigration, I still have some trouble. I don’t know why... And they are not about to give an answer why I am having this kind of trouble.

International Students’ Experiences with Faculty

One of the major areas mentioned by the participants of this study where discrimination is commonly perceived is in the educational arena. The international students interviewed for this study describe their perceptions of inequity within their own educational experience in several areas including their relationships with their teachers, encounters with staff, relationships with American students, and issues with the educational system.

Although most of the international students mentioned that a vast majority of their professors have been extremely supportive of their education, several of the interviewed students believe that they had at least one professor who treated them differently than the other students in their classes. Many mention that they felt as if their teacher favored other students, or ignored them:

Abby: Some teacher, you know, they, they, not thoughtful, they uh... like last semester, I was in condition class, and I thought, I don't know, that field or not, but I thought my teacher treat the others, eh... eh... more favored than me. She spend time with them, she talk to them, she explain to them what is the problem... But when I ask her a question, she is no... like she is ignore me...

Interviewer: Ah, I see. Was that outside of ah, your ESL Classes?

Abby: No, in the class.

Interviewer: Oh, it was in your ESL classes...

I had my classes with Vietnamese, and I have ah Spanish, but... we got...are Muslim, you know? I think that she put me different than them. She welcome them, she laugh with them, she make jokes, jokes with them. But, with me, she sev...seve... separate me from them...

Similarly, Julie states the feeling that some of her ESL teachers are more biased towards the Spanish-speaking population in the class, since the teacher's native language is Spanish:

... the problem is with teachers. Well, probably might be like my own opinion, but, the things is, like um, if teacher is from South America, or if there is Spanish speaking student, yeah I can see that. There is a little difference. You know, you know what I mean? Like if they are from same origin, the treatment is different...

Interviewer: Ahh..

Julie: Sometime I'm confused. I came to the United States to learn English, but I think I have to study Spanish for my teachers.

James also mentions that he had some experiences that gave him reservations about his teachers, and whether or not they had his best interests at heart. In the interview, his body language (crossed arms, rocking in his chair, and constantly looking from the floor to the ceiling) led me to believe that he thought his teachers were not professional, did not look after his best interests, and were in the profession for questionable reasons. :

James: Um.... I'll tell like this: In my regular classes, I am going right now in regular classes, and ESL classes. Most of the time, not in all classes, ESL classes, in some classes in ESL program, I feel nervous.

Interviewer: You feel...

James: Nervous.

Interviewer: Nervous...OK.

James: Cause, teacher's education system is not right. They try...Since the...Without...they think we are stupid, do not know our right, they...don't treat us well, Like unfair. As... I know some teachers discriminate us like in????, not???? but racism. Like, for example: Ah.. I am from one nation, yes? I am treated much more better, my same nation, speak same language, same culture share ??? treat better than the rest...

Although James had a hard time trying to communicate his ideas to me about his feelings towards his teachers, and he never mentioned why he felt that his teachers saw him as stupid or

how they discriminated against him. His body language and his tone of voice led me to believe that something must have happened, and that his claim was credible. I can only speculate that this might have been motivated by James's interpretation of external issues, such as the lack of pay for teachers, or that a lack of education might be the cause of some discriminatory behavior.

In several other cases, students described teachers that they felt were openly impatient and unsympathetic towards international students. Teachers would not offer to help their international students, even though it was clear that some of the student needed his or her help:

Tiffany: And then like the teacher uh... not willing to help me.

Because he said "Oh, it is your problem if you don't speak... understand... like you come, you come from another country and you do not understand all the content and it is your responsibility to be in the same level of English as the other student which, which are native American." [Heavy sigh] And not willing to help me at all... I had to, I had to uh... drop the class because I couldn't, it was here in LPU, and I couldn't handle it. I was like, I felt like... I left the class. When the teacher like, he said, "you will... your English is not that great" in front of the, in front of the class, I just got up and left, and dropped [laughs].

Julie: Like when I make same mistake, same as American... They try to... How can I say... teach me in a bad way, and they don't know how to speak well, and also, they don't try to understand... Like... I mean... Like United State... English is not my mother

tongue. So Sometimes I, even though we heard the same word, I understood in a different way cause, I just know the word in the dictionary. That's it. I came hear to learn how it works, and how it...But they always say "why don't you do this, blah blah blah..." and they do not know how to speak, sometime they try to teach me in front of other people, and try to embarrass me, and sometime like this...

Abby: Uh, no... But I think I uh... We need you know, to learn more, and the teacher supposed to be more patient us you know? Because we don't speak good English, they supposed to treat us a little bit car... more careful? Because we need you know a little bit to understand everything. Because we not... We're not born here. We come from other country, different culture... and they didn't put that in their mind, you know? They thinks like they are supposed to know everything... but we not. You know everything is different, the language, a culture here...everything.

In a separate case, Brady describes a Jazz history teacher who she felt singled her out as a representative of the French people, due to many French musicians' involvement in the growth of Jazz worldwide. Although she appreciates the attention, she feels that the teacher is very shortsighted in assuming that all French students know about, and have an intimate connection with Jazz. She also feels uncomfortable in having to represent an entire country and culture:

Brady: Um, and for example in the Jazz History class, uh, I'm often referred to, as uh, you know, he will be talking about a

French musician, or French word or something... I would, I would be um... what's the word? You know, he would just call to me, or mention me or something.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Brady: So, it's kind of a weird feeling sometimes.

Interviewer: Right. Let me ask you this: Do you think that um, maybe um, a lot of international students that come here are often um... I don't want to say used in that manner, but often they are used as the represent... representative of the entire country, the entire culture...

Brady: Yes.

Interviewer: ... in, in a situation like that. Where a teacher would, I think uh... trying to make some sort of personal link; they are jumps to certain assumptions...

Brady: Yes!!

Brady also feels that the heightened scrutiny placed upon her by the teacher makes it appear to the entire class that she does not know anything about New Orleans music, and that foreign students are ignorant about American culture:

Brady: Uh, there is also... What I don't like is that the other students in the class think that, "Well, she is the new girl, and she doesn't know anything about New Orleans Music..." And I probably know more than a lot of them [laughs].

International Students' Experiences with Staff

One of the major sub-themes that emerged from this study was the perceived negative treatment of international students by the staff at the two institutions profiled in this study. Most of the students in this study mentioned that they had at least one instance where the staff in the bursar's office, registrar's office, international student office or departmental offices were either rude, not helpful, or incompetent at their jobs:

Tiffany: I'm French, but I don't look French, And I, but I have a French accent when I speak, they don't like, I don't know why, but they do not identify me as French, even though I have a French accent. So like they just being very mean to me. And not only to me, but my roommate, which is... she is international, like because we don't speak perfect, like perfect uh English. I guess we just, you know, just being very mean to us. Most of them. "Just speak English please..."

Interviewer: Ahh. So they actually make a point of, of saying uh...

Tiffany: ...you're not from here, go... they don't say go back to your country, but it's like... it's uh... "Trying to express yourself better please," or "Speak English please," or "You're in Louisiana, so you have to get used to Louisiana," so like if you don't understand, they don't explain to us, because like, well... And it's... yeah, it's typically, I don't know, It's from what my experience at LPU. With...

Interviewer: These are...

Tiffany: ...a, with staff member.

Some of the participants in this study perceived that their lack of proficiency in English caused the staff at their institutions to treat them differently than domestic students. Several of the students mention that the cashiers in the bursar's offices refused to help them because they did not understand the student's accents. They were asked to come back later when someone who understood different languages was working:

Danny: The first time I came here, I uh somebody in the, the cashier said me: "Uh... WWWWWwhat, you, you, you... I don't understand you..." and she call another people that supposed that, I, I, I speak English, I think I speak, not very well but... All the people that I communicating all places uh, uh, understand me. But, she have this the, uh in her mind that "he is Hispanic, and I don't, I don't understand him." And she doesn't eh... try to understand me... I don't know why, but uh, uh, uh I, I try my best. And they, don't understand me, and said: "Hey, wait, wait, wait. You wait. Wait, wait, wait, you wait. So, every time I have to wait. I have to be the last. Or, there are nobody to tend me.

Margarita: They are not going to help me, not going to...

This, there's certain favoritism, there's... some people, and then even though you qualify, all along, they just uh... It might be your accent, it, it might be the way that you look, and sometimes you

feel like you're bothering them. You can't go ask them something, and it is like are bothering them...

Interviewer: You are talking about the workers, that are in charge then...

Margarita: The workers. Yes... So it kind of turns you off and you are like, I don't want to deal with this people. Sometimes they are very help... it just depends who is there. Sometimes they are very helpful, sometimes it is like... "What do you want?" You know. And then, then it's kind of like... "Don't bother me... Just go.

Interviewer: So they will just basically say uh... can you give me a like... for example...

Margarita: They will quickly say: "Well the lady who speaks Spanish is not around.

Interviewer: So they will say like uh... They will ask you to maybe come back later, when this person...

Margarita: Uh huh, uh huh...

Julie: Usually they are kind, But there are times that they do not understand...It is kind of...how can I say..Speci...special terms

Interviewer: Like technical terms?

Julie: Like technical terms or words, so sometimes I don't understand. They say "Huh?" and they get really upset. I don't know why, but they get really upset and they yelled at me. They

say: “What? Blah Blah Blah..” If I know English, I wouldn’t come here...Then why am I here? And I pay money, I pay money for you (Speaking of the American worker and student). I don’t understand, I really don’t understand...

When I asked Abby about her experience with the staff on her campus, she mentioned that most were polite and helpful. There were some staff that seemed unwilling to help her, and she speculates that it is because she chooses to wear the Hijab:

Abby: Yeah, this... they have some people good. They treat me good, no problem with them, and other, they... they don’t like me, you know? They don’t like to... to... deal with me or to stuff.

Interviewer: Mmm...

Abby: They give me hard time...

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow. Do you think uh... as you had mentioned before, do you think that maybe it is because of the hijab...

Abby: Yeah...

Interviewer: ...or how you dress, or...

Abby: Yeah, I think it was the Hijab. And they think it’s silly or why I would be... It’s my religion, you know?

Abby: And nobody come to me and ask me good way, or nice way to hear me, you know? But on the other hand, no, they just, me just, the first time they see me, they judge me.

In addition to the perception of staff neglecting to help international students in need, there were also several instances mentioned by the participants where the staff were trying to be helpful, but did not possess the knowledge or skills to help the international students with tasks at hand:

Brady: So I asked the international student advisor how it would work, and um... Well it seemed that I could easily pass out of this when I would get here, so I ask her what is going to happen if I pass out when I take the exams. And she didn't really... She always you know, avoided that answer, because uh, I had to give my... You don't have to give your transcripts if you want to be in ESL. But you do have to give them if you want to be in anything else... I mean, she's, she's nice, but she doesn't answer any questions. She doesn't um... really help with anything...

Joe: The staff? Um... [long pause], I have one like, yeah. I have once um... When I pay my tuition, I try to pay my tuition online, and I um... and I don't know why, but it charged me twice. In my credit card. Uh huh.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Joe: And my, I, I tried to call the office uh... they said like um... I said I don't know what happened but, it charged me twice in my credit card. And, and they, they said like "It is not the school problem, it is not the website problem..." it is my fault, cause I

click twice on it, or whatever. And I, and I and him argue together about it...

Interviewer: Did they take the charge off?

Joe: Actually um, they didn't, but the thing is that I, I have to pay like \$2,500. But at that time, I only paid \$1,100 so I keep try, so it's gonna be like \$2,200. So they didn't take it up, just you know... and I have to... Cause anyway I had to pay, but you know that time, I just want to pay \$1,100. I didn't want to pay double.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Right.

Joe: And I tried to talk to them, but we are guilty, so that's why I can't, I can't, you know, take the money back. I have to pay it at the outset.

International Students' Experiences With American Students

Another major sub-theme that emerged from this study was the perceived treatment that international students received from American students. Most of the participants in this study reported mixed feelings about their interactions with American students. Although many of the participants felt that their educational experiences were enhanced by interacting with American students, some remarked that they had experienced less than ideal treatment from American students. The most common complaints by the interviewees were that American students would make fun of international students' dress, accent, and customs, and that American students would not associate with international students:

Danny: Umm, basically the, the, the relationship was good. But, eh, there are eh every time there are people that eh... American

student mostly, they do... laugh about your dress, or, or they smiling, or say, say words no? Behind you. Ah... ah their accent.

They, they, they fer... they say that this funny accent... Well, they, they think that we don't understand, but we understand.

Interviewer: So they uh, they, they make fun of you by the way that you dress...

Danny: Yeah...

Interviewer: ...by the way you look...

Danny: Yeah...

Interviewer: ...by the way...

Danny: By the way

Interviewer: ...by the way you talk...

Danny: ...the way you talk, yes.

Interviewer: Uh Huh.

Joe: Sometimes. In some cases. Uh huh. Yeah... um, um... For example, when we you know, we play basketball, I am small, and I play with the, the tall and the Black American. They play good and they makes fun, and they talk something, um, you know, um...

I don't understand. But they laugh.

Interviewer: Ok. They, they try to imitate your language?

Joe: Uh huh.

Interviewer: By saying nonsense words?

Joe: Uh... Actually they say something together and they laugh.
Um... yeah. But I think they talk about me, you see? But um,
sometime I kind of like, um, hard to talk to native speaker, student.
Yep, cause sometime I think I doesn't speak English very well, so
they kind of don't understand me. That's why they, you know,
they don't want to talk.

Margarita: Um... going to just the other classes other than ESL,
Um... think that everybody kind of... they are not very friendly.

Interviewer: Ok. Can you give me an example of how maybe uh...
like uh, any, just a very generic situation, like uh, maybe what they
would do to make you feel left out?

Margarita: Uh... For instance, I have an African American lady
sitting next to me in, in math. And she is so curious about what I
do, or what my grade is, and, and she's always spying to see what
grade I got. And, and, but then she doesn't share her, her
information. It's just curious how did I do a certain exercise, or is
she, her exercise matches with mine, and, and she just kind of turns
her back towards me, you know?

Interviewer: Ah. She is trying to look off of you, and maybe get
some information from you, but rather not uh...

Margarita: ...not share hers... it's like if you don't fit into their
group, they, they won't include you. Or try to help you. Um...
To, they can see, you can have problem understanding something,

but then they won't come forward and say, "do you need help?"

Or they just keep to themselves.

Tiffany: Uh... first of all, being class in... uh... in like being in the middle of American student and none of them wanted to speak to me because I was international first [laughs]

Tiffany: I've been experienced uh... uh... I've experienced like uh, in my English class, we talked about being immigrants and stuff. And most of the students, I was very embarrassed, because most of the students, they said: "Uh, we don't want international, because like, we are going to orientation, and we don't want international students to, to take our jobs." So they say like: "We want to kick everyone outside. Like any international, or any immigrants outside of America, because they take our uh, jobs."

Troy: Actually I don't know. I uh, they kind of... I don't know uh... own people from out of your state, they are more open than... American students. I don't know why it's so. I, I don't have no idea. Maybe they kind of afraid of... or they have that kind of feeling that... strange feeling about us that says you don't want to talk.

Interviewer: I see. So you haven't had uh... Have you had any many chances to interact with uh, the American students here?

Or...

Troy: Nah, I try talk with some... I mean, I am, I have many American friends. But in student life here, at the most two guys. Just two.

Samuel describes a situation where he felt that his American roommate displayed a lack of sensitivity to his religious beliefs by using his cable TV account to order pornographic movies, when the two had previously discussed their moral values with each other:

Samuel: When I moved here, I didn't like my roommate at all.

Interviewer: Ah, ok.

Samuel: I didn't like my roommate. Because I took my ah, cable TV, and sometime I went to study to the library or some other site, and my roommate was watching like a pornography, but I didn't ask for the pornography. So that's the only thing that we got mad in other words...

Interviewer: So do you think that maybe it is... May I ask where the student, was the student an international student, or American?

Samuel: No he is not an international...

Interviewer: So he is an American student.

Interviewer: Do you think that maybe he wasn't respecting uh, your... I guess your cultural beliefs? Or, or, uh... or do you think that he was just not thinking? Or had you had a discussion with him before maybe about...

Samuel: No. Because first of all when I moved, he asked me, "Do you smoke?" I said, "No I don't smoke." So, sometime if he want

like to smoke, he go out, you know, smoke. When he finish, he, he come in.

International Students' Experiences With the System / Tuition

One of the interesting sub-themes that emerged from this study was the problems that international students experienced with the policies and procedures implemented by the colleges. Common to almost all of the students that were interviewed for this study was the perception that the colleges discriminated against international students by not allowing them to participate in financial aid and scholarship programs, especially since the tuition for international students is commonly double the amount that domestic students must pay:

Interviewer: Uh, um, any uh, have you had any other issues with our educational system here? Just, just the maybe the placement...

Troy: All right. If I knew that international students cannot get the financial aid...

Interviewer: Ok.

Troy: But, it is like we're paying three times more than citizens.

Why? Can you answer me to change it? Maybe just to give financial aid to international students.

Joe: You... The only um... let me see... discrimination that I saw is um, the school free... The school too???... Tuition...

Interviewer: Tuition... Ah... Ok. And what uh... what...

Joe: Ok. The different is, um, and international student as the [mumbles] has to pay um... to hun... um... two thousand five hundred a semester...

Interviewer: Uh Huh...

Joe: And I think the American, they pay only um... eight hundred...

James: Actually, yes.... uh... Want to bring some international students, cause we pay double money, double tuition...

Interviewer: Ok.

James: more tuition, and most is they don't give scholarship to international student, most colleges here, but most the students are ESL students, I do not know if they are all international or not, but I see at (school name) is a lot of ESL students. Sometimes more than regular classes, so they should support us kind of ESL students, not regular classes.

Julie: We pay more money than American students, and they do not try to understand us. So we pay money more, and they say that if you late, then don't come to school. Then what are you going to do with my money? I pay money, I do well even they don't have a school???? international student. What are you going to do with the money? Even tough they don't let us know what they are using, right? I mean, I don't think that they won't accept international

student. If they really want to accept international students, there should be a special way for funding, or scholarship, or what else...

Danny: Yes. I know a lot of people that want to come here to eh... to, to the school to eh, study. But one of the very, very difficult problem that we have is that it is very expensive. It is very, very expensive. Here in New Orleans... I, I pay around \$3,000 with books for each semester.

Tenado: OK. Ah... Maybe charge, you like to charge a lot of money, because we want to learn, language for every, we want to stay here, that's... that's... what happens all over the world. Maybe they take advantage of our, our curiosity, or our, you know, our studying kind of things... on the other hand, college wise, they have a lot of nice scholarship program, anyway, but until I get that one, it's really, you know, just like big charges man...

Troy: All right. If I knew that international students cannot get the financial aid...

Interviewer: Ok.

Troy: But, it is like we're paying three times more than citizens. Why? Can you answer me to change it? Maybe just to give financial aid to international students.

Interviewer: So that uh... That's a big issue.

Troy: Yeah, that's a big issue.

One of the pressing issues that some of the international students mention is that there are policies from within the colleges in this study that are not fair to international students. An example of this is the lack of a mechanism for students to test out of remedial classes. Troy had attempted to test out of an introductory college algebra course, since he had completed advanced algebra before coming to the United States. Although he tested out of the course on the college's placement exam, there was no mechanism to allow him to sign up for the advanced mathematics courses that he needed for his business degree, since the introductory algebra course was a prerequisite to higher-level math courses, and the school would not recognize the course credit from his international transcript:

Troy: Uh... All right. My, to come here, actually I delayed all my things. I, I kind of starting everything number one. And I...

Right now, going to Troy: Because, when you come to the college, even if you start from the beginning, you start from the calculus, the least one.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Troy: But the calculus I then the calculus II, for calculus, the beginning of calculus. If you come here in college, you have to start here from ground up. I am not understanding Math 118, the program from my high school, the grade of eighth grade.

Interviewer: Do you think that there should be a policy in place that students should be able to test out of certain classes? Like if you already have the knowledge...

Troy: Yeah, if you already have knowledge, yeah. That would be really great. Because first, I tried to do that, but I couldn't.

Interviewer: Ah, so, so the school would not allow you to... uh, if you will, to uh maybe take a placement test...

Troy: Nah, I took placement test. I did good, but you know they put me in 118... And one of my friends had the same problem too.

International Students' Experiences with American Society: Stereotyping

Nearly all of the students that took part in this study expressed the difficulties in attempting to pursue a degree in a foreign country. As described in the above sections, the challenges that international students face academically can be daunting. Complicating the issues that international students face is the prospect of moving to a new country with differing customs, languages, dress, and values. The majority of the students in this study felt that the most difficult part of studying in the United States was negotiating life in America outside of academe. They also believed that they experienced much more discrimination outside of the campus environment:

Danny: Uh... Yes. I didn't feel ah... discrimination before in my country because all the people are the same. And, but, we are different races like, like here but the people treat you the same each others. And here ah... when I came here the first time, I feel ah, ah, ah very strong difference between the races, no? And, and I think it's more uh to the Hispanic population you know, because it is... there are a lot of people that cross the border in, in, and we are different in color of skin. But they think that we, we are all, all the

people that came here... eh... from Hispanic country is illegal, and, and, and you don't have to show your passport or visa to other people no? And, and, and pass me a lot... I feel, feel the discrimination here. I, I have a own personal meaning for this, but uh... here in United States, feel that discrimination a lot... There are a lot ignorant here. Every time they call me Mexican, Mexican, they don't know that I am from Peru, no? But, uh... they uh... I think they call me Mexican because uh... uh... I am Hispanic. And, uh... and uh... they think that all Hispanics are Mexican. But it's not...no. ??? [Laughs].

James: Most of the people here...most of the people in Louisiana, I can say, most people is ahh...There have a lot of ah.. Spanish speaking right? So, I don't look like the Spanish speakers, so mostly, American, Americans thinks that I am Spanish, and I am stupid, and I don't know...like "Stop talking in Spanish..." If you say them "I am not Spanish.." So they say: "Well, you are, you look like one of those.." I think it is kind of discrimination. Not against me but against speakers.... that...that is stupid...exactly, they think like this. Out of here, they think if you are not, if you, if you cannot speak proper English, they think you are stupid.

Margarita: It, umm... probably unequal treatment towards Hispanics... Umm... You know, you, you, you notice other people looking at you differently, and, and... just generalize all Hispanics... and the, the one think.

One group is you know like, “well if this group is bad, all Hispanics are bad.” Just generalize and instead of... individualize each person, you know, well, they’re not that quite... I mean, there are some Hispanics that do bad things, but not all of them.

Interviewer: So you feel that...

Margarita: ...do that way...

Interviewer: ...that, that... I guess... people tend to generalize uh... a group that you might be from, so no matter if you are from Spain, or Mexico, or Honduras, or Peru, or Guatemala, they always lump you into “Hispanic” and, and always think that...

Margarita: ...one group, yeah...

James: Kind of, mostly when I went to restaurant, we were not service because of they thought I was like this.... maybe they thought I am Mexican or somebody who will not pay much, or not give them tips...

Joe: Um... I think we are... they see us like alien. Something like that, you know? They don’t, they... You know, when...

Sometime, for example, I'm international student. Sometime I see somebody just in, and I, I, I come over there, and I talk, try to talk to them, but I haven't seen like, any, you know, any native speaker come and speak to me about anything, you know? They kind of like, stay away from international student...

Tenado: That is a totally different world...I guess....Ummm....I don't know they, what they are trying to do, but just look at me like...like alien, or something like that... The people in the United States, um...maybe think that... really like conservative, or the people from my country, they, they, what do they know about Japan? Maybe Kung-Fu or Karate, that kind of stuff. "Show me some Karate..."

Interviewer: So you are saying that most Americans would think that because you are from Japan, you automatically know Karate, or Kung-Fu...

Tenado: Yeah. I think it is interesting because this year. Cartoons, this kind of things is popular in the United States, so they much more like stereotype us. Like I am supposed to teach you, I'm supposed to teach...You know, Teakwondo, even though teakwood, That's interesting, that's interesting. Ninja, "Can you teach me ninja kind of stuff?" I was like "Man, I don't know what the hell you are talking about... What?" ... That is the interesting

part, on how they react, and how they look at me, not only me, but stereotype the Asian people or what ever. So whatever. Actually I get used to it. And now, Next time I can only guess how they, how they insult how they treat me. Kind of things...

When I asked Margarita where or when she felt like she was under scrutiny, she mentions:

Usually driving around, you know. I notice it more when driving around, more than... when you go to the store, or... or any place else.

Interviewer: Uh huh. So like when people... when you are driving around, will people make comments towards you, or they make faces towards you...

Margarita: No. You just notice in their look.

Interviewer: Ahh. So they will just kind of...

Margarita: Stare at you and then change real quick, and... you know if they see you looking at them, they will just look the other way real quick.

When asked how she thinks the average American feels about international students, Margarita answers:

...you're intruding, you know? You are intruding into their country.

Interviewer: Are you talking like about the, maybe the officials at the uh... airports, or officials at the embassies?

Margarita: No. Not them, is just the...

Interviewer: Just the regular American people?

Margarita: Yes, just the people there on the street.

Margarita: Like we are intruding. Intruders in their country. That we should go back.

Interviewer: So you feel that Americans maybe feel that umm, international students all are, um... maybe taking...

Margarita: Away from them...

Interviewer: ...resources, spots, from what should be Americans?

Margarita: Uh huh...

Danny: They don't like to, to talk, or they think that you are not able to, to speak English, or to talk with them. And, and they thought then because uh, ????? It happen to me a lot in the bank, in the restaurants, in, in the... in, in the... different places... Oh, I, I eh... said this, more as a position of a Hispanic, no? They don't care if you're a student, if you're a worker, if you're a... They think that... A, the, the majority of people, American people, think that you are illegal. ??? I walk in the store and they say: "Well, back, oh, go back to Mexico..."

Joe: Um... I think we are... they see us like alien. Something like that, you know?

Joe: They don't, they... You know, when... Sometime, for example, I'm international student. Sometime I see somebody just in, and I, I, I come over there, and I talk, try to talk to them, but I haven't seen like, any, you know, any native speaker come and speak to me about anything, you know? They kind of like, stay away from international student.

Interviewer: Do you think that they might be afraid, or...

Joe: No. No, I don't think that they are afraid, but they, they just ignore us.

Joe: A special when I play in you know, Rec. center in New Orleans East, they are like messed up over there. [mumbles].

International Students' Experiences With American Society: Negative Treatment

As seen in the last section, most of the international students in this study feel that Americans are very quick to stereotype international students, and that many choose not to associate with them. What is perhaps more disturbing are the actual incidences of discrimination the international students in this study have faced. Abby mentions that she sometimes feels that her dress and accent cause Americans to discriminate against her:

Abby: Not exactly, but you know, I have a some friend, I heard of them they you know, some people they bother them, but actually me, no. Not as much [looks off into the distance like she is remembering something]

Interviewer: Like when they bother, you mean like name calling...

Abby: Yeah, they call them like eh “You are ah, wearing rug in your head...” They are you know, mocking them? And ah... They making fun of them all the time. And some neighbors, they never talk to them, or think they prejudice, or something like that.

Abby: Uh, I told you for you know some people ??? was nice to me. And they have you know like some good and some bad. Sometimes when I go to restaurant, some waiters doesn’t you know, respect me, and she like, she put the food for me like I am not human being, you know. And some of them they treat me good you know.

Abby also describes her experiences with a neighbor that has not been friendly:

Abby: No. They ah... my experience, my neighbors, I say hi to them, nobody say hi back to me.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Abby: I don’t know what the problem is with them. I try to be nice, I talk to their kids, trying to be, you know, good and make relationship with them and they all the time, they never talk to me and never say nothing. But I’m a good neighbor, you know? I don’t make noise, I stay in my home, I don’t do, do trouble with them, nobody... why they, they take this, this side for me? You know?

Abby: Uh Huh... Yeah, and the... nobody understand me.

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: They don't give me a chance to...

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: ...to do better, you know. To learn more.

Interviewer: Uh Huh...

Abby: Nobody give me a chance.

Tenado describes the treatment he gets when trying to order food, and traveling around town. He feels that his foreign accent and physical features are a reason for his experiences:

Tenado: Most likely like language problems is always like...like.... Um... like "can you speak English?" "Yes." That kind of stuff.. "You can speak English, OK..." "What kind of stuff..."

Interviewer: Oh, so that is a kind of situation that you might have had before...

Tenado: Yeah. That kind of thing is.. yeah.

Tenado: And they kind of make fun of it...and uhh...and finally, you know, "Oh, OK. That's fine, man. That's fine man...Its....Ok..." I didn't...I didn't tell them...what I really want to tell them....you know.....Just, just that, that they think...much more like "Man, I don't know what you are saying..." and what, what saying, makes me much more pissed off like much more like trying to telling you something very and I don't want to tell...That things happen...Often.

Interviewer: OK. Can you tell me like what situations that might be in when that happens...

Tenado: When ever I go to McDonalds.

Interviewer: Oh. So whenever you are out in public and things like that...

Tenado: It's like I order... and they didn't...they didn't fix my food or you know..

Interviewer: Ah. I see.

Tenado: That kind of things happens to me and....Most of like restaurant kind of things...fast food restaurant kind of things..

Interviewer: OK

Tenado: It's really, you know I feel more like, like insulted.

Interviewer: Ah. Ok.

Interviewer: Have you experienced this at any other places?

Tenado: Hm.... Popeye's...Popeye's...or Subways..

Joe mentions a similar instance when attempting to make purchases. He feels that his lack of command of English marks him as a foreigner:

Joe: Sometimes... Yeah of course sometimes when, when I am to order something, not, I, I think like I can do is good right now, but sometime I have problem when I talk to the cashier, or I want to buy this, or I want to buy that, you know? Like when they, um... what kind I like, or... But its, I think its all about my English, and that's it.

Not only are international students subject to partial treatment in certain social situations, in several cases the students expressed that they have experienced verbal and physical harassment by Americans. Danny describes an episode where he witnesses several Hispanic workers being attacked by a group of American youths:

Danny: The other day I saw, I was in the Elysian Fields and Claiborne, there is a corner of workers there. Corner of workers eh... they labor workers. We, help, help them. And, like 12 o'clock or 12:30, a lot of people from, of, of, a lot of very young boys from school, high school, they are going to eh... their house. And they pass from this corner. And they throw a stones. To these guys. I don't know why. I, uh... we tried to uh... to take up conversation with them, but they run, you know? They, they throw a stones!! Why, there is... I don't know why... they saw... like enemy, the Hispanic, no? Enemy? We are not here for fight with nobody, no?

Tenado discusses an instance that made him fearful for his safety:

Tenado: Mmmm....That is a totally different world...I guess....Ummm....I don't know they, what they are trying to do, but just look at me like...like alien, or something like that...When I am riding bike, yeah....Um....Some like Black dudes, coming from????...Sometimes yelling at me, some like...

Interviewer: So you are saying like sometimes they look over their shoulder and say something at you...

Tenado: Yeah. That, that exactly...

Interviewer: Or give you weird looks?

Tenado: Mmhm...Maybe I'm weird. That's what they feel maybe.

Because of... You know...Because of...Maybe...I don't know. I

don't have a car. Riding bike. Sometimes nighttime, you

know....(Looks off into the distance. He is contemplating

something, or reliving an event).

Tenado then describes an instance where he was verbally accosted by an American while riding on public transportation in downtown Baton Rouge:

Interviewer: What would happen on the bus?

Tenado: They look at me funny.

Interviewer: So it's mainly a lot of stares.

Tenado: Yes. Yes...

Interviewer: Has anyone ever said anything to you?

Tenado: Yeah. I was in Baton Rouge.

Interviewer: Baton Rouge?

Tenado: I was in Baton Rouge, you know. "Hey man, why are you

here for? Blah Blah Blah..." (Imitating a Black Person). "Man,

I'm just, Man I am just going to downtown Man.." Maybe he

might have been just drunk, or whatever, but uh...But uh... "You

not supposed to be here" That is what he is...

Interviewer: That is what he is trying to say.

Tenado: Yeah. (Visibly getting upset) “Man, I am just Student, I’m just going downtown from LSU. What... What seems to be the problem?”

Danny also mentions that international students are subject to poor treatment because of racist attitudes that are present in the South:

Danny: No, yes. In, in New Orleans, we are in a, a city huh? I, I saw this more difficult in, in the towns. Because there, there are workers that work in, that work in ah...

Interviewer: The small towns?

Danny: They are very, very racist!!! Very, very racist. You, you, you don’t have a right to go to a bar because you are Mexican. You, you are going to a bar? No. They say no, no you are, you have to go out. It’s very, I, I...

Interviewer: Right.

Danny: ...why... and the police are... every time they see you have... “Show me your papers, show me your papers...”

Interviewer: Wow...

Danny: It’s very, very... remind you. If I have uh, uh... opinion about uh... the American, then, now change a lot. Because, They say me, it’s only in the South. Because in the North, I live in Washington in 2005 for five month, and, and I don’t have a, really, a bad experience. But here is very, more... you feel more in this...

Danny also feels that international students are often racially profiled by American law enforcement:

And, like today, today, no? Like today I came 7:30 here, I have to come 7:30 here to have a exam, exam here. And...then I am driving and, and one police... A black police... uh, see me... the other side of the street. And he see me driving... And he go around... and put me the lights. In, in the morning. Ah.. 7:15. And, and I said "Sir, I am very... I'm busy, I want, I have to go to take an exam..." "No. Show me your, your ID, your driver's license..." I show him my driver's license, and he wait like 15 minutes... and the computer looking for this... And, and I, I loose the time in... and every... I eh... think that like 15... 50 or 40 times in... uh... in this last year, the police stop me.

Interviewer: Uhuh...

Danny: Because they thought that I have, don't have paper or have driver's license or I don't have nothing.

Several of the students mentioned that they had a difficult time trying to find an apartment to rent, and believe that Americans are unwilling to rent to them because they are foreigners:

Tenado: Actually I was looking for the place to stay, um...um...after the Katrina, that was hard. I went to places on St. Charles, on St Charles street (An expensive district). Yeah, so many times, maybe after the Katrina, the Katrina time..."We are

looking for, we are looking for like the American family, or we are looking for the person together, like only the one people, because they, think I can't afford it, or maybe I am Asian, and can't speak English well. That happened to me. Maybe they seeing....much more, of course they need the money too.

Tiffany: Yeah. Like I just uh, just try to look for apartment, because I didn't know what to do for next year, and I just gave up. Because like I am international, uh, they're scared of renting like, I guess, renting apartment to international student. It was off campus. And... everything is tough. Renting apartments, renting even a car, or whatever.

Several of the study participants who were granted work permission indicated that they had difficulties with securing employment, and believed this to be due to their status as foreigners. In several cases, employers were unwilling to hire foreign student workers, even if they had work permission. Other students describe poor working conditions where they were treated differently from domestic workers:

Abby: Well, when I want to... I, I, I do not work, but I want... and I apply many work, jobs, and they spect...expect me. But you know, when they do the interview me, they see me, they not going to give me the job...

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: because you know, I am a Muslim, and wear the Hijab.

Interviewer: I see.

Abby: I don't have that opportunity, to get other job.

Abby: In the community.

Interviewer: And you think that that is because uh... You're being stereotyped?

Abby: Uh Huh... Yeah, and the... nobody understand me.

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: They don't give me a chance to...

Interviewer: I see...

Abby: ...to do better, you know. To learn more.

Interviewer: Uh Huh...

Abby: Nobody give me a chance.

Interviewer: And uh, would you think that the way that people look, the way that they dress, the way that they talk are major issues...

Abby: Yeah...

James: Uh, actually I came here two years ago with J1 visa, which is like work-exchange program, ah, my, my, ah, I used to work in a company, like a three sided contract, me, my sponsored company and employer.

James: Yeah, my sponsored company ????? trying to...supposed to taking care of you, actually they from the beginning are making mistake. They are thinking to make the money...

Interviewer: Ahhh...

James: So exchange student, they think it is source of cheap labor, so they can making money more from students.

Interviewer: Right...

James: Regular...Ah...Ah..for American employee, McDonald pay 10 dollar per hour, but for exchange student, they pay 10 dollar to company, and the company pay seven and a half dollar, so for each hour, company make two and a half hour...Ah...two and a half dollar per hour.

Interviewer: Ok.

James: So, if they bring...usually they bring thousands of exchange students, so they thinks only to making money, not about students exchange program. So mostly you will be discriminated, you will be treated unfairly, at these places.

James: So I used to work in McDonalds. You know, it's a, in our country, we used to think that McDonalds is a really (unintelligible), a really good place to work like... a famous, well-known company. So I just choose McDonalds. I start work after I find out for Americans, it is last place to work. But in worldwide,

when they in exchange program, they usually advise, all advisor,
advise you that it is best place to work.

Interviewer: Really?

James: Yes.

Interviewer: Wow!!!

Even though James had a hard time communicating with me, I believe that he was trying to imply that many of the work conditions experienced by international students is sub-standard, and that many businesses routinely use international students as cheap labor. He also seems to imply that because there is a steady stream of international students, the companies can treat them poorly, since there will always be more students to fill the positions when one quits.

Tiffany: ...and I'm not giving up yet, but I'm thinking about giving up, because like I've been through interviews and stuff, and as, like as an international student it's very hard. It's almost impossible. Like after I talk with my professor, he said like, I'm not good... like I'm a good student, and I have no problem with school, and uh... and he say like "You have not equal chance to find a job..." because he thinks also, because I'm international.

Troy: Yeah. Of course, and because I was exchange student worker, I had to work more that American workers. I did once, once at a time job of three persons.

Interviewer: Wow. So they made you do much more than the average person.

Troy: Yeah much more.

Troy: Besides at McDonalds, nowhere else.

Danny: There are people that keep the passport of the people, of the, the person that came to work with them. To... because they pay a little, a very low, low wage. And they, they don't want to go... go... go back to Mexico or to go to other places.

Interviewer: So they are just trying to keep them there.

Danny: Yeah, yeah...

Interviewer: So they hold it for control?

Danny: If I have your passport, you go back to your country? No!

Interviewer: Right...

Danny: It, this is insane. They think that we, we, we think that never exist anymore, but exists. It, it is the modern day slavery.

Summary

As this chapter has illustrated, even though a majority of the participants have been successful in their attempt to pursue a higher education in the United States, each believe that they have been subject to inequitable treatment in different aspects of their experience due to their status as an international student. The participants seem to feel that much of the negative treatment that they have experienced has been a direct result of their status as foreigners. They also feel that certain features such as their dress, language proficiency, religion, or physical

features contribute to marking them as different from Americans, which they believe targets them for unequal treatment. Using their own words, the participants have documented that they believe that they have been exposed to discrimination in three distinct areas: the Federal Regulations arena, the educational arena, and in American society

The following chapter is a discussion on the findings of this study. I explore the significance of the students' experiences from within the three separate arenas, and propose a modified conceptual framework based upon concepts from critical theory researchers to frame the discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussions and Implications

This chapter presents a discussion on the issues and themes that emerged from the interview data from chapter four. It begins with a discussion on the pilot study used to organize and frame this study, and the influence of the pilot study on this dissertation project. I use this section to frame the need for using a critical theory lens to help organize the disparate issues and themes that exist within the topic of discrimination.

I continue with a discussion on the rationale for using critical theory, and introduce the concept of “Sites of Struggle” as a primary organizing factor for my revised conceptual framework. Following the revised framework is a discussion on the actual issues of discrimination as experienced by the participants of this study. The chapter continues with a discussion on the implications of this study towards policy, practice, and future research, and ends with my concluding thoughts of the study, and the need for continuing research on discrimination using critical theory as an organizing principle.

The Pilot Study

As a precursor to this study, I conducted a pilot study as a trial run to work out some of the logistics that I anticipated would be present in this study. The pilot study was also a requirement for the doctoral program and served as a pre-dissertation project. Similar to this dissertation, the pilot study utilized an early draft of the conceptual framework model to organize the study. I followed similar procedures in selecting the gatekeepers, and in acquiring the study participants. The pilot study included five participants, all international students on an F-1 visa. Three out of the five participants were students from a two-year urban community college, and the other two students were undergraduates in a public commuter college in Southeast Louisiana.

One of the major findings that emerged from the pilot study was that international students described experiences of discrimination in specific areas of their lives. The pilot study indicated that the participants believed that they experienced discrimination with regularity in three separate areas: the immigration process, within the educational arena, and with American society in general. Although the literature in the area (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980; Asmar, Proude, & Inge, 2004; Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) seemed to agree with this, none of the researchers put forth a systematic model to organize the international students' experiences. I did not see a formal or agreed-upon way of linking the three existing areas with the issues of discrimination together to form a holistic picture of the students' experiences.

The pilot study also suggested that most of the participants did not experience discrimination in all aspects of their lives, but in specific arenas. Most of the participants in the pilot study believed that their status as foreigners contributed to the experiencing negative treatment.

Finally, the pilot study demonstrated that there was very little literature on international student's experiences with discrimination, and almost no studies that reflected the first-hand accounts of the individual students. The pilot study also indicated that there was no systematic model to link all of the disparate areas and issues that contribute to the international students' experiences. More importantly, the pilot study indicated that there was an absence of studies that examined discrimination from a critical theory perspective.

Critical Theory and Development of Emergent Themes

In order to better understand the significance of the disparate areas where international students commonly perceive discrimination, I turned to concepts from critical theory in order to organize the themes so that they can better explain the holistic experiences of international

students. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991, 1985) use the term “sites of struggle” to describe an environment where inequality exists due to the imbalance of power within an organized social relationship. Critical theorists believe that sites of struggle tend to exhibit the expressions of, and enforcement of existing power relationships. Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) also believe that there are three issues that are present in sites of struggle: a belief that current relationship structures will reflect the norms and beliefs of those who wield power and influence, those that are in the minority will experience inequitable treatment, and recourse for persons that have been affected by policies of the majority is extremely limited (if available at all).

In this study and the pilot study, each of the main areas where international students commonly perceive discrimination can be seen as a site of struggle. I see each of the main areas: the federal regulations arena, the educational arena, and American society (social arena) as a separate site of struggle. Each of these sites reflects the norms, culture, policies and traditions of those in power.

Since international students by definition come from a country other than the United States, and the total population of international students will always be significantly less than the population of Americans, international students can be viewed as a minority population. The chances that international students will experience inequity due to differences in culture, norms, or traits that mark them as outsiders (dress, language, or physical traits), are also greater than domestic students.

The lack of access to recourse for international students that have been affected by the policies of the majority can also be observed in the three different arenas. Because the three defining characteristics of sites of struggle are present in each of the three different arenas organizing this study, I have chosen to use this concept in organizing the themes that emerged.

In addition, I have significantly modified my conceptual framework model to reflect the sites of struggle, which is explained in detail below.

Revised Conceptual Framework

As with many qualitative studies, different themes and ideas tend to emerge, change, or evolve as the process of conducting a study unfolds. In trying to understand how the different arenas where international students experience discrimination relate to each other, I found it necessary to make some significant changes to my original conceptual framework model.

As mentioned in an above section, I was influenced by the concepts of the critical theorists, specifically the ideas promoted by Aronowitz, Giroux, and Freire regarding the imbalance of power in social relationships. The three above theorists suggest using the term “sites of struggle” to denote an environment where there is an imbalance of power (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 1988). As mentioned in this previous section, I chose to use the concept of sites of struggle to define the three different arenas in this study where international students experienced discrimination.

The new conceptual framework model (figure 2) revolves around three interlocking arenas of struggle: the Federal Regulations arena, the Educational arena, and the Social arena. Each arena is represented by a circle that contains a list of the major themes that emerged from the transcript data and the literature on international students and discrimination. Where two different arenas (circles) intersect, I have listed themes and issues that are representative of the interaction between the two arenas. Finally, in the middle of the model where all three arenas intersect, I have listed the three fundamental criteria that define the sites of struggle (the unchanging status quo that represents the value structure and culture of the majority, the

inequitable treatment towards the minority that is inherent to a site of struggle, and the lack of recourse for the minority).

I feel that this model is a much better representation of the issues of discrimination that international students experience, which is reflected in the literature, and that emerged from within this study. It also demonstrates the interactions and influences between the different arenas where international students experience discrimination more clearly than the original model. As with many qualitative studies, the changes to this framework resulted from the themes that emerged from the data.

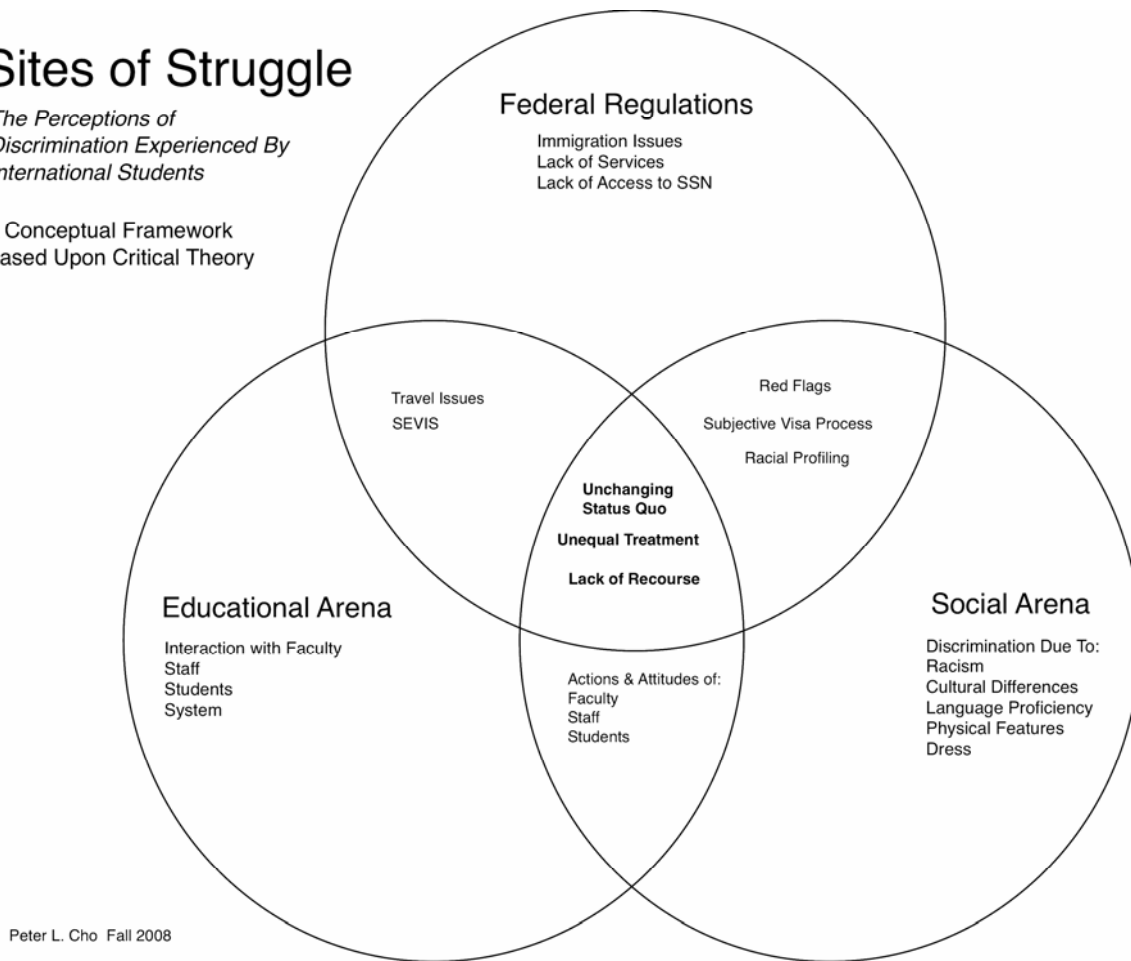
I intend to propose this revised model as a formal conceptual framework model for the qualitative study of international student experiences with discrimination, and hope that it will serve as a springboard for dialogue on the issues that international students face on a daily basis. I also hope that this model will be used as a tool by practitioners of IE to organize all of the complex issues of inequity that plague international students, to better serve the international student population at their own institutions.

Figure 2

Sites of Struggle

*The Perceptions of
Discrimination Experienced By
International Students*

A Conceptual Framework
Based Upon Critical Theory



The next section is a discussion on the sites of struggle as it relates to the experiences of the participants in this study. I discuss the significance of the participant's experiences and its correlation to the existing literature, and how their experiences differ from the accounts documented in the literature review. I also present the implications of this study on the current policies and procedures from within the three arenas, and the changes that I would suggest in order to provide future international students with a more equitable educational experience.

International Students and Their Experiences With Sites of Struggle

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Immigration

As depicted in the conceptual framework model above, one of the main sites of struggle where international students perceive discrimination is in the official US Federal regulations arena, specifically the immigration process. Several participants in this study believed that the interview process with US immigration officials was not objective, and that the current process allowed the official's personal prejudices to enter into the decision of whether or not to grant the student an entry visa.

As mentioned in the literature review for this study, Feagin and Eckberg (1980) describe the tendency of people to naturally gravitate towards persons with traits similar to their own. They mention that prejudice is often motivated by the preference of one's own group, class, or race over persons considered outside their group. Asmar, Proude and Inge (2004) also mention that issues of prejudice usually stem from previously held beliefs about other group's traits (physical traits, dress, language proficiency, religion).

Several of the participants in this study seemed to feel that their religion, dress (specifically religious garb) or family background were significant factors in the difficulties that they experienced as part of the visa interview process. Abby and Chad both mentioned that they felt that the interviewers attitudes towards Muslims probably added to the difficulty in obtaining their visas. Abby further mentioned that she believed that wearing her Hijab made it much more difficult for the interviewer to objectively see her as a regular person, which Cole & Ahmadi (2003) seem to affirm. Tiffany also had significant difficulties with the interview process due to her family background. The Victoria University study (2006) seemed to suggest that prejudice is more commonly directed towards groups that are more culturally dissimilar from members of the

host country. Because she is Filipino, and was adopted by French parents, Tiffany feels that the interviewers scrutinized her more thoroughly than the White French students that also applied for a student visa.

According to Schmitt et al. (2003), the students who have perceived discrimination in the past would be predisposed to believing that the interviewing process, and the immigration process would be biased against them. I do see a strong connection with the incidences demonstrated in the literature concerning the similarity of the students' physical features or cultural traits to the treatment that they received from immigration officials during the personal interviewing process. It also seems logical to understand how this group of international students would perceive that they had been discriminated against, because their dress, physical characteristics, or language skills are different from domestic students

Likewise, even though I do see a very practical need for US immigration officials to use their intuition in determining the validity of an applicant's reasons for traveling to the US, I also agree that immigration officers can be influenced by their personal prejudices when making the decision to allow or deny a person entry into the United States. As mentioned by the above researchers, I believe that many of the prejudices that we as individuals have towards our specific group or against other groups are subconscious, and ingrained into one's own world-views, which would make an objective decision by immigration officers fairly difficult.

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Lack of Access and Unintended Consequences

One of the interesting themes that seemed to emerge from this study was that in several instances, the perceived discrimination towards international students seem to be the unintended results of current federal policy. The policy that was mentioned the most by the study's

participants that seemed to have the most unintended consequences toward international students was the policy that makes it extremely difficult for international students to obtain a Social Security Number (SSN).

Currently, international students are only allowed to apply for a SSN if very specific criteria are met. First, the student must have clearance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to apply for work permission (Social Security Administration, 2005). The student must also show original documents that can prove his or her immigration status, work eligibility, age, and identity. Because the original purpose of the SSN was to track earned income for tax purposes, it is closely tied with work permission. The difficulty for international students lies in the unofficial uses of the SSN as a form of official identification by third parties as part of their procedures for conducting business.

According to the Social Security Administration (2005), non-residents do not need a SSN in order to purchase savings bonds, conduct banking business, register for school, seek private health insurance, or apply for subsidized housing. However, because the SSN has been accepted as an official form of identification by businesses for so long, and the practice is still being followed by many third parties, many international students are being denied services.

As this study has demonstrated, the lack of a SSN presented many of the study's participants with challenges to daily life that would not have been an issue for a domestic student. Tenado, Samuel, Tiffany and Joe mentioned specific instances where they were prevented from opening a bank or checking account, renting an apartment, purchasing a cellular phone, or obtaining an Internet account without a SSN. Several students in the pilot study also described the difficulty in conducting daily business without a SSN. This is a problem that most domestic students would never face, but is very common for international students.

Although previous interviews with directors of IE and the pilot study have shown that there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about the affect to students that a lack of SSN can have, there were surprisingly few instances documented in the literature on this topic. There is a brief mention in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Johnson, 2006) of the State Department's lack of concern towards academe's fears of what the impact of tightening SSN regulations would do to international students. There is also another Chronicle article that mentions that laws and regulations would make it even harder for international students to obtain a SSN or driver's license (McCormack, 2007), but does not elaborate on the difficulties this would have on foreign students. The only other documented instances of the problems that international students face as a result of not being able to obtain a SSN I was able to find were located in two journals geared towards academic advising of international students (Charles & Stewart, 1991; Lamkin, 2000). I am a bit surprised at the lack of instances of this issue I found in the literature, and think that this is one area that deserves more attention. I will address my comments on this issue in a following section concerning implications towards policy.

International Students' Experiences with Federal Regulations: Lack Of Recourse

Perhaps one of the most pressing issues for the participants of this study seems to be the lack of recourse available to them when issues of discrimination arise. In this study, Tiffany had an extremely tough time trying to remove the security markers, or "red flags" from her file. As part of the immigration process, her original immigration file was flagged for scrutiny, due to her family background. As a result, every time she travels either domestically or internationally, she is constantly being stopped by immigration officials, and challenged about her immigration status. Even though she has repeatedly attempted to have the markers officially removed from

her file, she has not been successful, and continues to be stopped and challenged every time she travels.

In several instances, the participants of this study attempted to file grievances with federal agencies concerning the treatment they received as workers in the US, or for other issues regarding unfair treatment. In this study, James and Julie described the attempt to report the negative treatment they received on the job to the US department of Labor. Both mentioned that they were able to file a complaint, but each ended up quitting their jobs once they realized that the companies were not taking their complaints seriously.

Danny also filed a complaint in an instance where a security guard in a public library would not accept his passport as a valid ID, and threatened him with her pistol when he tried to explain how an international passport was an internationally recognized valid ID. Danny mentioned that neither his immediate employer, nor any federal agency were willing to listen to, or follow up on his complaint.

In these situations, although a formal avenue for recourse exists, the study participants were unable to successfully seek recourse, and each believed that an American student would have a better chance of obtaining a successful resolution. Furthermore, Danny and Julie believe that being labeled as a foreigner (due to language proficiency, physical features or dress) contributed to the lack of support or follow-through of their complaints.

As in the previous section, there is little in the literature that documents the issues of the lack of recourse for international students. Lee (2006) mentions that international students that are informed of their rights are likely to feel respected and empowered. Arnone (2003a), Hoover (2003) and Johnson (2003) demonstrate the lack of recourse in describing an incident where Yashar Zendehedel, a Middle Eastern student was detained and was almost deported due to a

mistake in SEVIS regulations, even though he was eventually able to prove that he followed proper procedures. Bollag (2004) also mentions an instance where an airline worker mistakenly collected a Chinese student's I-94 card, which resulted in the student's deportation, regardless of efforts by the student to argue her case.

There is even less in the literature that discusses the successful resolution to the types of scenarios that were described by the participants of this study. This makes it difficult to present a more balanced view of the lack of recourse available towards international students when they feel that they have been discriminated against. Even though I might feel that the lack of recourse for students who have been affected by the policies and procedures set forth by the federal government can be perceived as inequitable towards the participants, I believe that there is insufficient research in this area to form a complete picture, and that more research in this area is warranted.

International Students' Experiences with the Educational Arena

In contrast to the Federal regulations arena, international students' experiences with discrimination in the educational arena is well documented. There have been at least five quantitative studies that have explored international students' experiences with their faculty and staff. The researchers mentioned in the literature review of this study (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Hays & Lin, 1994; Olivas & Li, 2006; The Victoria University study, 2006) all describe both positive and negative relationships and experiences between international students and academe.

International Students' Experiences with Faculty

In this study, one of the most surprising findings was that a majority of the participants described the seeming lack of sensitivity towards the needs of the international students

exhibited by the ESL or intensive English faculty. Several of the students mentioned that they felt their ESL teachers treated some students better than others. Abby mentioned that she felt that she was ignored by her teachers because she is Muslim, and wears the Hijab to her classes. Julie and James mentioned that they felt that several of their ESL teachers who were Hispanic treated the Hispanic students in the class much better, joking and socializing with them in Spanish. Several of the students in the pilot study also mentioned that they felt as if the foreign language teachers seemed to treat students that shared the teacher's ethnic group or language preferably.

This was surprising to me, since I had assumed that instructors of the international student population would have probably have been more empathetic towards the specific needs of the international student community. I also believed that educators who teach the international community would also have had specific training in cross-cultural issues and perceptions that would alert them to instances where their students are in distress. As discussed previously, I think that Feagin and Eckberg's (1980) theory that people will naturally gravitate towards those that share the same cultural traits is pertinent in this case. This leads me to wonder if the students' experiences are based upon the differences between their culture and world-view and that of their instructors, and that the perceived partiality might be rooted in these differences.

Several of the participants mentioned that a few of the teachers in non-ESL classes treated them rudely, or impatiently. The students felt that some of their teachers were unsympathetic towards their language difficulties, or exhibited impatience at the length of time it took for international students to communicate their ideas to the class. Tiffany, Julie and Abby each mentioned that they had several professors who stated that it was up to the student to become more proficient in English so that they did not affect the flow of the discussions in class.

Some professors even encouraged the students to drop the class so that the rest of the students would not be affected by their lack of English proficiency. Several of the students in the pilot study also described their teachers as unsympathetic to their language difficulties.

Lee and Rice (2007) opine that American institutions and American professors often feel that it is the student's responsibility to adjust or adapt to American culture, rather than the institution's responsibility to accommodate international students. Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) also mention that international students often have difficulties developing relationships with their teachers due to language issues. Even though I believe that the international students are responsible for developing a level of English proficiency that would allow them to succeed in an American classroom, I opine that American professors could have extended the students a bit of latitude with their language skills to enable them to fully participate in the class, without much loss of class time. The professors could have also suggested the use a recording device for the students to record the lecture (or other strategies), so that they might be able to review the materials outside of class, rather than suggesting that the student withdraw from the class.

International Students' Experiences with Staff

One of the common experiences that a majority of the participants in this study shared was the belief that they received negative treatment from the non-academic staff at both of the study institutions. In several cases, the students mentioned that personnel at their schools, particularly in the bursars and registrars office refused to provide service. The most common complaint of the participants was that the staff refused to help them once they heard the student's accent. Several of the students mentioned that the staff member would ask the students to return at a later time, so that another person who could understand their language would be present to

help them. The students further mentioned that the workers refused to help them even after requesting help a second or third time.

Similar to the discussion above on the international students' experiences with faculty, I see the issue of language and culture being a major contributor to the actions of staff, and the perceptions of those actions by international students. As Krahe et al. (2005), Hayes and Lin (1994) and Met (2001) have described, language plays an extremely important part in being able to communicate ideas. In this study, most of the issues that the students complain about revolve around staff not wanting to serve the students due to their language proficiency. I wonder if the staff's hesitation to serve international students might lie in the composition of the staff (whether the staff are professionals or students that have been hired for work-study to offset the cost of their own education), or if other factors such as preference for one's own culture as described by Feagin and Eckberg (1980) contributed to the hesitance of the staff in helping the international students.

Because the services of the staff are essential to each of the student's education, I do see this as an issue that should be addressed. In both of this study's schools, international students believe that they were treated differently, primarily due to their language proficiency, and in several instances, their dress. In each case, students were prevented from conducting necessary transactions that could affect their academic record, or in some cases, their immigration status. It also seems that the treatment the international students experienced also had an emotional effect on them. As Schmitt et al. (2003) has illustrated, several of the study participants mentioned that this type of treatment made them feel invisible, and that their situations were hopeless. Other students mentioned that being treated differently than American students made them upset, and left them feeling discouraged.

One interesting issues that emerged from this study was that there was a perception that the international student advisor at both institutions did not do an adequate job. Several study participants that mentioned that their needs as international students were not being met by either of the school's international student advisors. Two of the students described CCSL's international student advisor as ineffective, not knowing her job, and unable to provide specific answers about changing visas, obtaining transcripts, or other important issues. One of the students in the pilot study mentioned that the international student advisor (from another school) had been extremely negative, and would not allow her to enroll in an advance mathematics class, even though she could demonstrate that she had the requisite skills for the class.

In each of the above cases, the lack of skills or ability of the school's designated official to handle the needs of the international student community has been described by the participants as a major source of frustration, because the consequences of wrong information by school officials might jeopardize the student's immigration status. The students felt that the school was not willing, or unable to properly fund such a position, or did not care enough to address these issues when brought to their attention.

The only mention in the literature of the effectiveness of international student advisors was described Charles and Stewart (1991) article describing international students' perceptions of advisors and other authority figures. They mention that differences in how advisors are perceived by students can be a source of tension. They also mention that cultural perceptions of authority figures can make the student-advisor relationship ambiguous.

Because the students in this study mentioned specific issues with their international student advisors concerning job proficiency, and in my opinion, I did not notice or perceive any cultural differences being the root of the problem, I wonder if other factors such as language

comprehension, or the perception of how the advisors followed stated procedures by international students may be a factor in the students' experiences.

International Students' Experiences With American Students

It seems that the participants in this study viewed their experiences with American students with mixed emotions. Although several of the participants mentioned that they had negative issues with American students, most of the participants opined that the vast majority of their interactions with American students had been positive, and contributed to broadening their educational experience. This seems to agree with the research conducted by the Victoria University Study (2006), which suggested that a majority of international students visiting New Zealand were very open to intercultural interaction, and that such interactions were associated with positive outcomes.

In general, the students that described negative interactions with American students thought that the attitudes of the American students were often the problem. Danny, Joe, Margarita and Abby mentioned that they often felt as if they were being made fun of by American students. They mentioned that American students would often tease them about their dress, or physical features, or try to imitate their accents. Several of the participants mentioned that they felt that American students did not want to interact with them, or tried to avoid them on campus.

As the Victoria University Study (2006) mentions, the participants in their study felt most comfortable being around persons culturally similar to themselves. Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, and Pisecco (2001) add that the process of acclimating to new cultural norms adds additional stress, and that international students will often experience social loss due to unfamiliar environments. Even though I was not able to ascertain the amount of contact between

the international students and domestic students from this study, I wonder if the perceptions of the international students are related to the amount of interaction between the two groups based upon the research of the Victoria University Study (2006). I also wonder how frequently the international students tried to initiate contact with American students, and if the perceptions of the international students might be correlated with the international students' willingness to be the initiator of the contact.

In the instances where the international students were adamant that American students had made fun of them without provocation, I wonder if the lack of contact with international students, or the desire to fit in with one's own group contributed to their behavior. This leads me to believe that the American students might naturally feel more comfortable with students that are more culturally similar to them. I also think that American students who make fun of the international students may do so in trying to "fit in" or gain respect of their own peer groups.

International Students' Experiences With the "System"/ Lack of Recourse

The participants in this study described several issues that were linked with the "system" of education such as prerequisite course issues and tuition/financial aid issues that they considered discriminatory because of the lack of recourse students had to address the issues.

One of the participants in this study, and one from the pilot study mentioned that they were required to take prerequisite courses, even though they had the requisite skills to test out of the course. Since there was no mechanism to either formally assess the student's skills, or there was no mechanism for substituting core courses in the curriculum with ones that the student had already finished, the students were required to take a course that did not benefit them, were required to pay tuition, and were barred from taking higher-level courses due to the lack of such a mechanism.

Again, there is a lack of research in this area. Because I did not find any instances of this in the literature, I have no way of judging the range of the problem, but can speculate that it is an issue that international students face. I believe that there might be simple solutions to this issue that I will discuss in a later section.

Another issue the participants mentioned was their perception of the inequity of financing the cost of an American education. A majority of the students in this study complained about the lack of financial aid available to international students, and tuition rates that are almost double that of domestic students. In some of the follow-up questions used in the interviews, the participants disclosed that they were not aware that most American students had a substantial portion of their educational expenses subsidized by government or private entities. The students were also unaware that many of the scholarship were generated by private organizations to support specific groups of people, and not the general population.

I did not find any literature regarding the specific issue of international students and their struggle with financing an education in the United States. However, articles by Lasher and Greene (1993), Hearn (2001), and Johnstone (2001) discuss the issues of federal financial aid in the context of funding for higher education. Voorhees (2001) discusses the revenue streams for schools including federal aid, and the implications of funding on different populations of students. These articles present the issues of federal funding of college educations, but do not address the access of financial aid for this study's participants. Because this is an important issue for the participants in this study, I will address possible solutions, and implications for research in a following section.

International Students' Experiences with American Society: Stereotyping and Cultural Differences

As described by Hanassab (2006), Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), Hayes and Lin (1994) and Feagin and Eckberg (1980), international students are more likely to experience discrimination off-campus, while trying to negotiate life in America. The researchers mention that the similarity to or differences from a host country's culture can be a determining factor in the amount of discrimination that an international student experiences.

In this study, almost all of the participants mentioned that they felt as if they were discriminated against much more frequently off-campus, away from the educational environment. In most cases, the students complained that they received unequal treatment due to several specific factors. Visible factors such as the dress or physical features seemed to be the most obvious determinant of ill treatment by Americans. Other factors that contributed to the student's experiences of discrimination were the language proficiency of the student (including severity of foreign accent), and perceived country of origin of the student (which would also include the perceived traits of culture and value by persons from that country). This is consistent with the research conducted by Feagin and Eckberg (1980), Hanassab (2006), and Poyrazli & Grahame (2007), who suggest that cultural differences surrounding physical characteristics, linguistic differences, and dress are often sources of prejudice.

Several of the participants mentioned that they believe that they received poor treatment by Americans because they were mistaken to be Mexicans. After Hurricane Katrina a large influx of Latin American immigrants (many who are undocumented) settled in the Gulf Coast region, hoping to help rebuild the areas devastated by the hurricane. I think that much of the discrimination directed towards the participants is a direct result of this. I believe that many of

the indigenous persons from the Gulf coast region feel as if the immigrants are invading their country, and competing for jobs and resources that are perceived to be scarce. As discussed in an earlier section, persons in a society often feel closer to persons that have similar cultural traits, and feel that the “foreigners” are not members of their group (as suggested by Asmar, Proude and Inge, 2004). I wonder if Americans who discriminate against Latin Americans do so in reaction against a perceived invasion, and threat to their own livelihood.

International Students’ Experiences With American Society: Negative Treatment

One of the key themes that emerged from this study was the actual negative treatment the participants in this study experienced due to prejudice attitudes from Americans. Almost all of the students in this study and the pilot study mentioned numerous instances of ill treatment, verbal harassment, physical harassment, and racial profiling. Most attribute their status as immigrants as making them easy targets for such treatment.

Many of the students in this study experienced discrimination while ordering food at fast-food restaurants. Tenado, Joe, Abby, Danny and three of the students from the pilot study described poor treatment from restaurant staff. In most cases, the cashiers were rude to the students, mentioned that they couldn’t understand their English, or made fun of their accents while ordering. In many instances, the participants’ orders were not filled correctly, and when challenged, the store managers did nothing to solve the problem. Abby also mentioned that many times she would not be served, or would be treated rudely by the wait staff at restaurants because of her choice to wear her Hijab.

As mentioned in the literature review, researchers (Hanassab, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Feagin & Eckberg, 1980) demonstrated that incidents of discrimination are much more likely to occur in social situations, due to the homogeneity of

American culture and society. In my opinion, I believe that restaurants and other public venues that are common gathering places for people will generally reflect the culture of the majority population. Although the majority of the local population in this study is white, the majority of the workers that the study participants encountered were other minorities such as African-Americans. Even though the workers that the students encountered were ethnic minorities, I still believe that the culture of the White majority contributed to the personal prejudices of the workers, and strongly influenced the culture encountered in the workplace.

Since fast-food restaurants typically attract workers that are either very young (high school students), or are limited in their job choice due to a lack of skills or education (due to the low pay and low social status of such jobs), I would not expect these workers to have had many opportunities to become exposed to persons, cultures, or ideas that are radically different from their own. In many cases, I think these workers do not know how to react to the presence of something that is not familiar. I opine that the ill treatment towards the “other” is motivated by both confusion at the unfamiliar, and the need to reinforce one’s own position (membership standing) in one’s world-view by creating a distinct contrast between them and the “other.” I also believe that the many instances of verbal and physical harassment that the students in this study have experienced to be motivated by the fear of Americans being associated with the “other.” This seems to support the theory of Victoria University Study (2006), which suggests that persons feel most comfortable with members of their cultural group, and will go to great lengths to be included as a member.

Implications for Policy

As a result of conducting this study, there are several suggestions that I would recommend in order to help better understand how international students perceive discrimination,

and to bring about more equitable situations for international student within the sites of struggle. There are several current policy issues that should be reexamined to determine equity and effectiveness. First, several policies of the Federal government should be reexamined for effectiveness and practicality. Second, specific educational policies that act as roadblocks to success and leave students without recourse should also be reexamined.

Implications for Federal Policy

As this study has shown, international students often have great challenges when attempting to enter the US for a higher education. One of the policy issues that I feel should be reexamined is the visa issuance policy. I understand and agree with the need to protect our country's borders against those that wish the US harm. I also feel that there should be a balance struck between safety for American citizens and the legitimate need for entrance to the US for higher education purposes.

As it currently stands, international students are accepted or denied based upon subjective interviews, where a single officer's personal biases and prejudices have an overwhelming influence on the final decision to grant or deny entry. I would suggest conducting research to examine the influence of preconceived prejudices on the immigration process, specifically on the role of the individual interviews. I would also suggest conducting research to determine if there are additional methods that can be used to determine the validity of a student's visa request. Should this research provide insight into better practices or alternative procedures or methods for screening foreign students, I would suggest that the results be forwarded to US Immigration officials for their scrutiny, debate, and possible adoption.

Another federal policy that I feel should be reexamined is the issue of international students' access to work permission, and its relationship with Social Security Numbers.

Although I am in favor of the US government creating reciprocal work policies with countries that provide American students work privileges in their countries, I also believe that there should be limits placed upon international students whose intent for entering the US is academic study.

I believe that the current system of allowing the US Department of Homeland Security to determine each student's eligibility for work permission is both fair, and consistent. Students that have obtained a visa for educational purposes should be responsible for following the guidelines set forth by the DHS concerning work permission. I do not see this as the main issue. Because the Social Security Number (which was originally designed as a tax identification number) has been linked with the practice of using the SSN as a form of official identification by third parties, the inability of foreign students to obtain a SSN has caused many problems for international students.

I believe that this study has shown that there is a disadvantage for international students not being able to easily obtain a SSN. I do not however, think that the Social Security Administration's policy is to blame. After having conducted this study, a suggestion that I would make is that all parties involved (educational institutions, international students, and third-party businesses) should be made aware of the specific provisions of the Social Security Administration's policy.

Because the Social Security Administration (SSA) has determined that international students do not need the SSN as an official form of identification for conducting daily business as described in this study, the third parties that currently require a SSN as an official form of identification should be made aware that the SSN should not be used as an official form of identification, and that a SSN should not be part of the decision on whether or not to allow international students to access their services. In order to help facilitate this, I would suggest that

educational institutions and the individual students take the responsibility in educating the third parties of this policy by having copies of the SSA's policies, along with the contact numbers of the local SSA office on hand, when attempting to conduct business with the third parties.

Another policy that I would reexamine is the current policy concerning travel outside the US for the purposes of academic conferences or other important academic events where the international student's participation is critical to a school's research or presentation. I would suggest that research be conducted examining the implications towards national security for allowing international students the permission to travel out of the country for specific sanctioned events. I believe that in conducting such research, a balance might be found that would allow international students access to international travel for specific school related events, while allowing the Department of Homeland Security to continue to protect the American citizenry from terrorist attack. I see a possible partnership between academe and the federal government in jointly conducting such research. Should it be found that the affect to America's security policy be negligible, I would suggest that the travel policy be reexamined.

Implications for Educational Policy

The recommendations that I would make toward educational policy revolve around investigating current policies that create difficulties for specific segments of the international student population, but do not have direct academic significance. The first policy I would reexamine is the policy concerning financial aid for international students. Since financial aid is often seen as a privilege of membership for domestic students, financial aid for international students is rare, and very difficult to obtain.

Because Federal financial aid is primarily funded by US tax dollars, the question arises about the fairness to domestic students and the US taxpayer in allowing international students

access to these monies. I would suggest that research be conducted on developing a different financial aid mechanism for international students that is separate from the current one supported by US tax funds. I think that creating a mechanism that is funded by non-federal entities such as partnerships between educational institutions, the education departments of foreign governments, private groups, or by the governments of specific countries to fund scholarships for their citizens might be one solution. Such a policy could allow individual foreign governments or business to sponsor specific individuals, or direct funds to specific scholarship programs geared towards their citizens. This might allow foreign students an avenue for receiving financial aid, as well as encourage foreign students to proactively petition their own governments to help defray the cost of their educations. I think that research in this area might provide some insights into balancing the needs of international students' needs for aid in defraying the cost of their education, and the needs of the US taxpayer in not incurring additional taxes.

Another area within educational policy that should be examined is the issue of forced prerequisite courses and other curricular requirements have no curricular value, but serve only as hoops to be jumped through. This study has shown that some international students are required to take prerequisite courses, even though they have the skills needed to take regular courses in the curriculum. In certain cases, this is due to the lack of a mechanism for international students to test out of the specific course, or due to the lack of a mechanism that can validate the credit of a course taken at a college from the student's home country.

Because there is virtually no literature that addresses this issue, it is difficult to determine how prevalent this problem is on a national level. I also wonder if the reasons behind this issue might be linked with the limitations of a school's student information system, the difficulty in making changes to existing curricular policies, or the purposeful use of prerequisite courses for

international students as an income stream for colleges. Because this seems to be an issue that might negatively impact international students in retention and degree attainment, I would suggest that research be conducted to determine if there are any viable solutions to this issue.

Implications for Practice

Although this study has shown that international students perceive discrimination in three distinct sites of struggle, the area that can be most readily addressed by this study is the educational arena. There are several specific suggestions I would make that might address the perceived lack of equity for international students as they attempt their education in US schools. First, institutions that routinely host international students should consider having several different international student advisors on staff, each speaking a different foreign language, and understanding the varied customs of specific countries. These advisors should serve as the official advisor to specific groups of international students, aiding the students in all immigration and educational matters, as well as serving as an official mentor to the students. For the two schools that participated in this study, there is a need for advisors that are fluent in French, Vietnamese, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian. I think that this would be the largest single step institutions could take to aid and insure the success of their international student populations.

Given the dwindling resources that have been the trend in higher education over the last few decades, this would seem to be a difficult task. Because of the funding challenges that exist, educational institutions would probably need to seek alternative funding sources in order to implement the suggestions above. Some recommendations I would suggest would be examining creative opportunities in partnering with foreign governments that routinely send many students to the US for study. I wonder if foreign governments would be willing to partner with specific educational institutions by providing resources to the schools for this purpose. Resources in the

form of direct funds, or sponsorship programs where the foreign country would sponsor a foreign national with the needed advisory skills to specific colleges for the purpose of aiding their citizens through the processes of immigration, school registration, matriculation, graduation, and moral support might be worth investigating.

A second recommendation I would make is having separate orientation programs that are geared towards students from specific countries or countries that share similar cultures.

I would use the orientation as a way of introducing the students to American culture, and also introduce specific cross-cultural issues and issues of prejudice that students are likely to encounter. I would also invite upper-level students from the same countries, or cultural group to present their own stories, sharing their experiences with the new students to help in introducing them to the college and American society. I think that this would help new students to develop informal support groups, which might aid the students in having an easier transition into American society.

There are also several areas within the educational arena that I would suggest specific training for faculty and staff who will come in contact with large numbers of international students. First, I would suggest that all faculty that interact with international students on a regular basis receive specific training geared towards the understanding of different cultures, and how their own actions might be perceived as being favorable towards certain groups of students. This would go a long way in insuring that all international students are treated fairly, and that they feel as if they are welcomed members of the class.

Because this might be seen by the faculty as an added burden to their current list of professional duties, I would suggest that incentives in the form of release time or credit for professional development be offered. I would also suggest that such a course be available as part

of the orientation process for new faculty, so that the incoming faculty would have some formal training on cross-cultural differences.

I think that there should be similar intensive training for all staff that manage critical services such as the bursars or registrars office. This study shows that international students believe that they are often not treated with respect, asked to return later, or refused help by staff. Courses focusing on professionalism, ethics, communication skills and cross-cultural differences should be offered as part of the hiring process for staff on campus. This should bring a level of awareness (that doesn't currently exist) that should make the interactions between staff and international student a more pleasant and professional one. I would be interested to see if ongoing assessment of the quality of services of these departments is as common as the assessment processes are for the academic side of the house. I believe that such a process would be able to highlight the issues described by the participants in chapter four, and insure that all students receive quality service from these departments.

Finally, I would institute a policy that discourages the treatment discussed above by providing specific disciplinary procedures for overt discrimination. Should instances of discrimination by faculty, staff, or students be documented, specific actions such as formal reprimands, mandatory retraining, or an investigative hearing should be taken to insure that overt discrimination towards all students is minimized. I would make sure that this initiative is taken seriously, and that resources are available to fully implement the policy.

Because many institutions have existing policies regarding discrimination in the workplace, I would suggest that the existing policies be reviewed to ensure the policies that are in place regarding discrimination also apply to cases including the international student population. I would also examine existing policy to determine if there are provisions for

corrective action for personnel disregard the policy on workplace discrimination. If such a policy exists, but does not provide for instances of discrimination towards the international student community, it should be amended to include this population. Should there be provisions already in place to handle issues of discrimination, the policy should be strictly enforced.

Implications for Further Research

After conducting this study, I realized that there were several areas that warrant further research. In addition to the specific recommendations introduced in the above sections on implications to policy and procedure, I have several suggestions for further research concerning issues of discrimination and the international student population, as well as future research based upon modifications to this study that have the potential for providing greater insight into the phenomenon of perceived discrimination in the international student population.

I would suggest replicating this study under slightly different conditions. I would first suggest using the revised conceptual framework as the starting point of a new study. I think that the themes that emerged from the data are sufficiently different from the ones from the original framework, and would give any new research project in this area a much stronger foundation to build upon. I would also suggest repeating this study using different types of colleges. Because this study focused on the population of international students in public institutions, private school students with differing socioeconomic and educational traits were not included in this study. I would think that such factors would affect a person's perceptions greatly, and yield very different results.

Conducting a longitudinal study over a significant amount of time, using this study as a baseline might also yield some interesting data. Conducting this study over time would also minimize the affects of Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Both

being relatively recent events, each have probably influenced the views and attitudes of both the Americans and the international student populations in this study.

One point of interest that emerged from this study is how international students from the majority culture in their home countries cope with becoming a minority student in another country. There were several students in this study that were considered in the majority in their home countries that had never experienced discrimination due to minority status until arriving in the US. It would be interesting to investigate their experiences in how their roles changed from being a member of a majority community to one of a minority culture. It would also be interesting to see how the experience of becoming a minority would affect the student's views on discrimination.

Similar to the above would be researching situations where cultural or ethnic minorities act as agents of majority institutions, such as someone of Hispanic descent serving as an immigration agent, or a college bursar. This might add insight into the context of majority versus minority, and the issue of critical theory as applied to education. This also might give some insight into how ethnic minorities and their roles as agents of the institution are perceived by the international student population, and should yield some interesting data.

Conclusions

This study was originally undertaken to help me answer some of the questions that many of the international students in my class had asked me about how they would be perceived and treated as foreigners immediately following the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks. In my initial investigation, it became clear that there was a lack of research in the area of international students and discrimination. I also perceived that since there were so many different themes and issues related to discrimination, that a conceptual framework model was needed to help organize

research in this area. Utilizing the concepts of “sites of struggle” from critical theory, I was able to produce a model that incorporated the many issues of discrimination that international students commonly experience.

In accordance with the traditions of critical theory, this dissertation is my attempt to utilize Paulo Freire’s principle of praxis, action based upon critical reflection, to illuminate the instances where international students perceive discrimination so that teachers and researchers can better understand the context from which international students experience inequity, and work towards an educational environment that is equitable towards all students.

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Appendix

Letter of Introduction

Dear International Student,

Thank you for the interest you have expressed in participating in a research study on the perceptions of international students experience with discrimination, and its affect on the overall educational experience of the student. I am hoping to document the experiences of students such as yourself, to gain an understanding of the difficulties you may have experienced as a result of discrimination towards you in the areas of immigration, school environment, and social environment. I also hope to learn how this experience has affected your overall educational experience in the US.

I hope to use this data in developing strategies to help international students cope with the challenges of studying in the US. I also hope that this body of knowledge will help the International Education Directors at your institution better understand the three different environments you experience, and how discrimination from these areas may affect your educational experience.

I will be conducting an individual interview with you, as well as a possible group interview at some later date. These interviews will be audio taped for documentation. You should know that all data collected by this study will remain strictly confidential, and that provisions will be provided to insure your comfort and control of the interview process. I am looking forward to meeting with you and am looking forward to hearing your story. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to give me a call at any time.

Very truly yours,

Peter L. Cho
Doctoral Student
Department of Educational Administration
Dr. Marietta Del Favero: Advisor
University of New Orleans
New Orleans, LA 70148
Office:(504) 671-6370
Mobile (504) 858-8175
e-mail: plcho@uno.edu
Appendix – B Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Research Study

Welcome to America? The Perceptions of Discrimination Experienced by International Students

Project Researcher

Peter L. Cho, Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Administration, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148. Contact information: Office:(504) 671-6370, Mobile (504) 858-8175. e-mail: plcho@uno.edu

This research project is in partial fulfillment of course requirements, and under the direct supervision and leadership of Dr. Marietta Del Favero, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling & Foundations, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148. (504) 280-6446

Purpose for this Research

This research project seeks to document the phenomenon of discrimination as experienced by international students in three common areas of life: experiences with US Governmental regulations, the student's educational environment and the student's social environment. This research project seeks to answer the question: What are international students' experiences with issues of discrimination and prejudice, and how has this shaped or influenced their view of their educational experience in the US? This project also seeks to document the specific problems encountered by international students in the three areas mentioned above. The data gathered from this study will be used in partial fulfillment of the Ph.D. in Educational Administration Degree for the University of New Orleans.

Procedures for Research

Participants will be selected by the Project Researcher, in conjunction with the gatekeeper from the institution(s). Each participant will be chosen based upon the student having experienced at least one significant incident of discrimination. For the purposes of this study, an incident of discrimination is defined as an interaction where the student perceives that he or she has experienced unfair treatment. Each participant will be given an introductory letter and a consent form. All students electing to participate in this survey will be asked to sign, and return the consent form to the Project Researcher. Upon receiving the consent form, the participant will be interviewed according to the interview guide. The consent form and all data generated will be kept on file in a secure location until the successful completion of the study. Upon completion, all materials will be destroyed.

Potential Risks or Discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. Students may however, experience discomfort when reflecting upon instances of discrimination or prejudice. The researcher will allow the student the option of terminating the interview in the event that the reflection becomes too emotionally painful.

Potential Benefits to You or Others

The significance of this study will be the addition of new data, not currently available on the impact of discrimination on the educational experiences of international students. The use of this data is intended to bring awareness of the phenomenon of international student discrimination, and to attempt to address some of the issues that lead to discrimination in the immigration, school and social environments of the students. This study will also attempt to aid directors of IE programs in developing strategies for advocating and aiding international students as they seek to further their education in the US

Protection of Confidentiality

Participant's personal information will be kept strictly confidential. No identifying information will be used on any materials or reports generated by this study, including transcribed materials. All materials, including this consent form will be kept in strictest confidence, with access only by the Project Researcher. Upon successful completion of the degree program, all collected materials will be destroyed.

Signatures and Consent to Participate

I have been briefed on all procedures, and aspects of this research study, and hereby agree to participate in this study. I have been made aware that as a participant, I may, at my discretion, terminate my participation from this study, without any negative repercussions or penalty.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Printed Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
Project Researcher's Signature	Printed Name	Date

**University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans**

Campus Correspondence

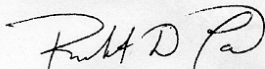
Principal Investigator: Marietta Del Favero, PhD
Co-Investigator: Peter Cho
Date: March 12, 2008
Protocol Title: "Welcome to America? The Perceptions of Discrimination
Experienced by International Students"
IRB#: 2APR08

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101(b) category 2. The minimal-risk study will use interview procedures and information obtained will not reasonably place participants at risk for criminal or civil liability or damage their reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,



Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix D – NIH Certificate

Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

08/25/2007 02:48 PM

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Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

peter Cho

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 08/25/2007.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

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Page 1 of 1

MEMORANDUM

TO: Peter L. Cho

FROM: Jeffery L. Smith

DATE: March 17, 2008

RE: Research Proposal

The Delgado IRB has reviewed your proposed study and has no concerns regarding your protocol as it relates to human subjects. Should your design require changes, you would be expected to let the IRB review those changes before instituting them.

Best of luck with your research.

Appendix F – Initial Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:_____

Date:_____

Place:_____

Interviewer:_____

Interviewee:_____

Country of Origin:_____

Ethnicity:_____

1) Tell interviewee the purpose of this study

This research project seeks to document the perceptions of discrimination faced by international students in three areas of their experience: Immigration, School Environment and Social Environment. This study also seeks to understand how the student perceives discrimination as affecting his or her educational experience

2) Explain the methods which will be used for data collection

Project director will conduct standard open-ended interviews of pre-selected international students. These students will be interviewed individually to give a first-hand account of their experiences with the phenomenon of discrimination. Students will be selected in conjunction with the institution's gatekeeper. Due to the nature of a phenomenological study, only students experiencing the phenomenon will be eligible to participate as interviewees.

3) Explain what will be done with the data

All data collected will be used for a pre dissertation as part of the requirements for the Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of New Orleans. The recorded data will be transcribed verbatim and the sound recordings will be stored in a secured location until the project has been deemed completed by the doctoral committee. Upon completion of the

degree, all sound recordings will be destroyed. All questions of confidentiality will be addressed at this time.

- 4) Explain how long the procedure will take

Interviews will last from 45-60 minutes each.

- 5) Answer any questions interviewee might have
- 6) Conduct interview

Possible Questions:

- 1) Please describe your life and educational experience before coming to the US, including your country of origin and area of study:
- 2) What does the term discrimination mean to you?
- 3) Please describe your experiences with discrimination as a student in the US?

- a) How did these experiences make you feel?
 - b) How did you react to the experiences?
 - c) What do you think might have caused the incident(s)?
- 4) Describe your experiences with the US immigration system:
- 5) Describe your educational experience since you have arrived in the US:
- 6) Are there similarities and differences between the educational system of the US and your home country?

- 7) Describe your experiences as a student at your institution, including the relationships you have with your teachers, fellow students and staff:
- 8) Describe any instances of discrimination you might have experienced on campus:
- 9) Describe your experiences off campus, including negotiating daily life and interaction with Americans and other persons.
- 10) Describe any instances of discrimination you might have experienced:

11) What do you believe the US society's feelings are towards international students?

12) Have your primary needs been met by your school, the US government, US citizens?

13) How has discrimination affected your perception about

a) your overall educational experience?

b) your stay in the US?

c) the people in the US?

- 14) Are there any other things that you would like to mention about your overall experiences in this country?

Thank student for participating in the interview, and ask if there are any questions that the student might have before the interview is completed.

Appendix G – Code Key

Theme Key List Peter L. Cho

Themes:

Revised 7-4-07

Emotions

Fear

Humiliation

Stress

Sadness

Anger

Actions

Unfair Treatment

Ignorance/ Intolerance

Support

Changes

Denial/ Avoidance

Internal Changes

Extra Effort

Removed Themes:

Empathy

Luck

Respect

Judgment

Trust

Miscommunication

**Theme Key
Level 3 Coding
Federal Regulations
Immigration**

Abby: Ah, it is longer, you know, it was a long process. It took I ah, more than a year to get my paper done. And because maybe that's I think before I wear the my scarf, because I now wear the scarf, everybody was ah... treat me good. You know, and respect me. And they left me, say hi and bye. And now, after I wear my Hijab, nobody, oh, the relationship between me and them is different.

Interviewer: ...that maybe the, the officials treated you?

Abby: Yeah. Because you know when I go to register or do other thing, they look me...they give me the weird look, and it was like I am stupid, or I do not understand what thing.

Abby: And they were...was mean to me you know? To finish my paper... they do not want to help me... that much, you know?

Danny: ...so it, it is like eh... 10 percent or less, than, than this. Than, than this get the visa. And the process is very ... a, a lot of people want to come here in the United States. There is a long lines, long line... The interview with the consulate is only five, no four or five minutes, no, no more. They ask a few uh few questions. But it only related to what you have. You have money, you have properties, you have a car... So if you have nothing, you are out. It's uh... simple.

Danny: And you uh... and, and, uh, it's very... The only people that come here are the people that have... middle class. No, no poor, no? But... My impression of the embassy was that, that I get my uh... I get my visa... My F1 visa is in Mexico. Cause I, they have a, a, a law here in the United States... they, they name the third country national. If you are from different country than Mexico or Canada, you get the visa over there. Only F1 Visa.

Danny: And H2, H1B. And, and I went to Mexico, and they treat me very, very... not bad, but they have a lot of question. In Peru, I said you I have uh... two times I be there in the consulate, in the Embassy. Eh, for my business, my B1 B2 visa, is a tourist visa, and, and for the H2B. And I have only 4 or 5 minutes of interview. Here, in Mexico, I have 25 minutes of interview. A lot of questions. A lot of questions in... in, related in... what is it you want here in United States, who sent you the money, and... and I actually show... I have... I said you I pass a lot of, lot of question... and um... and um... I am here no? I, I got lucky because there are a lot of people that said no, no, no, [mumbles] [laughs] [mumbles] eh, luck to be here no? They stay... But generally, in... in the government, there is a... there is not... I don't feel that a lot of discrimination, but in other places, for ignorance, I uh... I think this.

Danny: I, I think uh,uh, uh, it's not fair because we're, we're here, I'm here to, to study, no now. And I came here to help when I was ah working. I, I here to help to rebuild the city, no? I don't know, I, I think it's unfair. And, and I uh... other thing, I working in the valet parking in hotel here. And there, there are Russ...Russian people. There are Palestine people. There are Dominican people that work with me. And, and when the... the immigra, the ICE came, immigra, came to, to see them... we are legal, no? But they don't say nothing to them. It is uh... one thing that I am very... angry about this. Because they say nothing to them because they are... they look white. They are white.

Interviewer: Mmm.

Danny: They are white. They don't say nothing to them because they are white. They are Russian. You would speak with them, you would understand nothing. Or you understand a little bit? But, they're white. Yeah, and the Dominicans are, are black. They don't say nothing to Dominicans. They speak Spanish

Danny: Yes!!!

Interviewer: because of the way that you look, they single you out for that treatment.

Danny: Yes. Very bad for this, uh, uh, say why only the browns?

Danny: ...and that, and, and, I have experience in hotels that I work. They every time the manager, the one, the white man, tell me: "You are... you..." I ask when, when I came here, the people, FEMA in all the, the hotel, the rooms.

Danny: FEMA people. And I came here, and I, I started maintenance, and repairing and fixing the walls, painting... They said: "Why you bring here people? Is there a lot of people in the rooms?" and they are looking for work. And, and, and most people are black. And she said, he said me: "You know, ehh... black people are lazy." And in this moment I think it is truth. This moment, I came over month ago, and I, I, I though that this is a truth. That black people are lazy, are dirty, are all that my manager said me. But, after, after month, I think that I see... another manager... talking with a black housekeeper. And, and, and she told her in English, she thought that I don't understand, that people for us, for Hispanic, come here to a steal your job.

Interviewer: Mmmm.

Danny: This is, this is exactly what they say. These people came here to a steal your job. For us. For Hispanic.

Interviewer: Uh Huh...

Danny: And what did they try to say, to make this... try to... confront to eh...

Interviewer: To get you to fight...

Danny: Yes, yes, to fight. And, and in this moment, I start thinking, you know, that all the thing that they said me was a lie. And about the, the, the, the people, the black people are lazy. That they are no smart, no intelligent, they're dirty, all that kind of things that you might... and, this... and I, in this moment, I think that, that, that, the system is playing with us, when we two both just...

Interviewer: ...actually just trying to play against each other...

Danny: Exactly. They say that you, this night you are gonna, uh... ki... you are gonna be there, I kill you and so forth.

Interviewer: Even if you have the proper documents, travel is much a hassle. So...

Danny: The, the consulate has to sign the I-20 every time you want to go out...um... you know it is very difficult... um... to go and coming in...

Interviewer: Right...

Danny: But, uh... you have to uh... wait to change this note, no?

Joe: Um... In my case, I had no problem my visa, my passport or anything else. But others, Vietnamese student in Vietnam, Vietnam, they have big trouble with the visa. Cause, um... the US government, they do not want Vietnamese student come over here and stay here. That's why they limited the student to come over here by the interview visa, the visa interview. After, uh, before they come here.

Interviewer: What are common problems?

Joe: Common problems? For example: if a student in Vietnam they have um, you know, they have um, relative over here, they cannot go to the US to study, cause the US government might think they come over here and live with their relative and stay here. And they, the...the student won't come back to Vietnam. But just stay here. And that is why the US government limited the student to come over here...

Samuel: With immigration, I had no great problem. No problem. Because I went to the embassy three times to get you know like my visa. Because you know, when I was in Chad, my grand, you know my grandfather, he helped many you know like many president in Chad, to the presidency, our president. And like many the Republic from Central Africa, and sometimes the government friends send him to Congo, you know, because there is a war between the rebels and other stuff. And he is like the boss of the like military. So, because of him, and my uncle, I went to the embassy, so it was not easy for him.

Interviewer: I see. Did they uh... you said that it took three times?

Samuel: Three times it took to...

Interviewer: Did you feel that the uh... did you feel that you were treated differently than any other person?

Samuel: Yeah I think so. They treat me a lot different.

Interviewer: I see. Uh, when that happened, how did that make you feel?

Samuel: Because I didn't feel you know like my... I, I didn't blame my you know, my first of first of all, and sometimes... You know, I am from south, and I am from mou... north. Because the north of my country, it's more like uh, people practice you know, like uh... Islamic. And in the south, Christian, and sometimes Catholic religion. So, I went there, they saw like my name Madjou, so they favor not a lot of Muslim to get you know, like visa than like sud... like people from south. So it was not easy.

Tenado: Ah... Immigration... When I first got here in the US, I thought it was horrible. I was at the Houston airport. I have to say that immigration is very strict to us, and I was waiting, I was in the waiting room, like they, they, they took my passport, they took my visa kind of thing. I don't know why, what happen to it. But, that kind of stuff. Always making sure like if something strange like person from out of the country, terror ??? coming, there that is of course, especially after the 9-11.... But um, in my case, more than I was waiting up there for more that seven or eight hours. Up the airport. I missed the next airplane, maybe because the visa status was really different, a little different than the other people in the airport, but um... So I waited and waited, and luckily I got released, but it was still eight hours later. That is when I got the, the, that is my experience of immigration at the airport...

Tenado: yes. Three and a half years maybe. Yeah.... Immigration... I don't say it's lazy, but um, if I sent something to him, them, for um, for um, ah... like changing I-20 or something, or that issuing kind of stuff. Um... Sent to them, it is like, um is unexpected late. I was kind of say, maybe I can get it in two weeks. It takes maybe two months.

Interviewer: Ah, so it takes a long time.

Tenado: Yeah, so I don't say it is lazy, maybe a lot of things is going on but, you know, that's what they say the print says you will get in two weeks. The process wise, its like. A lot of things is going on. I feel like... they are lazy. It would not happen in my country. But, you know, I don't think...

Tiffany: Yeah [laughs]. Like with my with immigration, I am not like... I was... I am French. My parents are French. But if I say that also like everyone will recognize me...

Interviewer: That's ok.

Tiffany: And I told, I wasn't born in France, so I don't look French. Because I have been adopted, so... And first of all, they were asking me at the immigration why I uh... Why I don't look French. And I say, "you know it's my story, like I have all of my paperwork, and I've

been... I explain my situation why like I don't look French, and I've been adopted, and stuff... And they say, "Yeah, but your country, we don't know your country, we don't know like the city that you were born..." And, I've been asking like so many hours I stayed... One time I stayed like over seven hours like answering question. And they were treating me like if I was a [laughs] terrorist, or something.

Interviewer: Was this in... ah, was this in maybe customs in the United States, or was this in an embassy somewhere or...

Tiffany: No, no it was in the custom like I first flew in the United States. Like they were taking me from one customs office to another one. And they were treating me like... Do like... Took all my, all my uh, luggage, and check everything like... It was a big mess in the room. And like they all, even my body and stuff. And I was like "Wow. What's wrong?" And they threaten me to go back to my country. And, uh, on the first plane. And I say "No! I'm a student, I am not you know, I am not a terrorist. I'm, I'm..." And they said yeah, but like I have a brother with, with French... it's belong... he is like French. And he looks French. And, but he... and he works in Tunisia, so... And he said "Why, but why does he work in Tunisia?" And I say "He works for a French company, so he was sent to Tunisia. It's not my fault if my brother..." And they were treating me like if I was... And I stay like all the time when I come to the United States I have to pass by the immigration stuff. It's a big mess, all the time. I have to stay like many hours at the immigration because I don't look French.

Interviewer: And, and I uh, assume that all of the paperwork is proper, like the I-20's and...

Tiffany: Yeah...

Interviewer: and visas...

Tiffany: Yeah, everything is proper. But it was the same thing. Because I started my studies like a few years ago in the United States in another school, and it was in the same thing in the other school in New Orleans. I don't know why. I don't know why, uh... I don't understand why but like since I came back to New Orleans, it's been very difficult for me.

Tiffany: My experience with the visa is in Paris, because I had to go through the embassy. Uh, I had to go to the embassy. Usually it takes like one day, like one morning to, to get everything done. But for me I had to go back two days in a row. For all morning it took me like five hours. I stayed five hours in their office, and like they were asking me all these kinds of questions like: Why I want to work... like I want to study in the United States? Why my, my uh, my day was born there, he was born in Algeria, even if he is French? And why my brother was working in... And they were calling all like all of my family member to check if I was uh... why I was born in the Philippines, like, and, and why uh... everything about my story. And I thought like it was very... personal. And like they were not... Why they will ask me all these type of questions, and some of the students next to me they were asking also a visa to, to study in, in the United States, they were not asking to them the same question as me. And I thought it was kind of a... too much.

Appendix I - Definition of Terms

International student: a student pursuing a degree or skilled training in an American college or university that is not a permanent resident, citizen, or refugee; or a student that is living and studying in a country other than his or her country of origin

Foreign student: a term that is synonymous with international student.

Domestic student: a student native to the United States

Local population: American citizens living in a designated geographic area.

Discrimination: the unfair treatment of a person or group of people based upon preexisting prejudices.

Racism: discrimination against a person or group of people based upon his or her race, specifically the belief that one race is superior to another.

IE: international education

ICE: US government Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Formerly known as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)

SEVIS: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System: The US government's database and tracking programs used manage information on international students, and is designed to facilitate the entry and exit of international students to and from the US.

SSN: Social Security Number

Vita

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Cho is also a professional musician who has performed as a Jazz Pianist in the New Orleans area for over 20 years. He has also been involved with the Satchmo Louis Armstrong Summer Jazz Camp as a Jazz Piano instructor for over ten years. His research interests include equity in education, international education, and the affects of Hurricane Katrina on the musical community of New Orleans.